

917.7  
R25

SKETCHES  
IN  
DUNELAND

EARL H. REED








*Presented to the*  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
LIBRARY

*by the*  
ONTARIO LEGISLATIVE  
LIBRARY

1980







Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation









SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

---

THE VOICES OF THE DUNES

QUARTO BOARDS \$6.00 NET

ETCHING

A PRACTICAL TREATISE

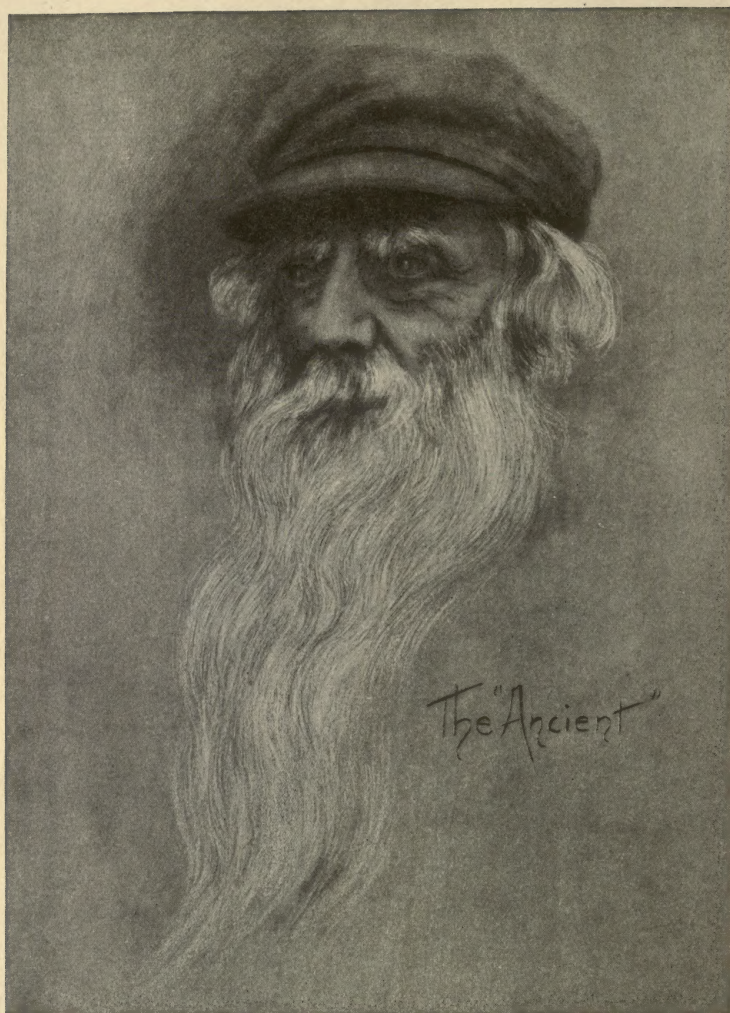
CROWN QUARTO CLOTH \$2.50 NET

THE DUNE COUNTRY

SQUARE OCTAVO CLOTH \$3.00 NET









24599



# *Sketches in* **DUNELAND**

*by*

**EARL H. REED**

*Author of*

"The Voices of the Dunes"  
"Etching: A Practical Treatise"  
"The Dune Country"

*Illustrated by the Author*

NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY  
LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD  
MCMXVIII

U.S.  
R



COPYRIGHT, 1918  
BY JOHN LANE COMPANY



F  
532  
N67R4

THE PLIMPTON PRESS  
NORWOOD MASS U.S.A



*To*  
THE MEMORY OF  
C. C. R.







## INTRODUCTION

**I**N the dune region that extends along the wild coasts of Lake Michigan, and in the back country contiguous to it, is a land of allurement.

The strange human characters, whose little drift-wood shanties are scattered along the shore, and among the sandhills, and whose isolated retreats are further inland, are difficult to become acquainted with, except in a most casual way. They look upon the chance wayfarer with suspicion and disfavor.

Readers of "The Dune Country" will remember "Old Sipes," "Happy Cal," and "Catfish John," the old derelicts living along the beach, further accounts of whose "doin's" are in the following pages. As portraits of these worthies have already appeared, they are omitted in this volume. New characters are introduced, who, it is hoped, will be as cordially welcomed.

The region is of important historical interest. Narratives of early exploration, and primitive

## INTRODUCTION

Indian lore associated with it, have filled many pages of American history. The Pottowattomies have gone, but the romance of the vanished race still lingers among the silent hills. While many poetic legends, of unknown antiquity, have survived the red men, the Indian stories in these pages are entirely fanciful, except as to environment.

The nature loving public will be fortunate if the organized efforts succeed, which are being made to preserve the country of the dunes as a national park. In compliance with a resolution of the Senate, the Department of the Interior, through the able assistant to the Secretary, Mr. Stephen T. Mather, has recently made an exhaustive report on the subject, which is most favorable to the project. Momentous events have, for the time being, eclipsed minor considerations, and this, as well as many other measures for the public good, must wait until the shadow of the Hun has passed.

It is only within the past few years that the picturesque quality of the region has become known to lovers of American landscape, who are now lured by its varied attractions.



## INTRODUCTION

The country is of immeasurable value to botanists, ornithologists, and investigators in other fields of natural science.

The Audubon societies are taking a deep interest in its preservation. Those of us for whom it is not necessary to slaughter songsters for the decoration of our hats, and who believe that nature's beautiful feathered messengers should not be made to bleed and suffer for thoughtless vanity, can sympathize with any movement that will contribute to their welfare. As a refuge for migratory birds, the proposed preserve would be invaluable. It is within the Mississippi valley flight zone, and during the periods of migration the bird life in the dune country is abundant, but unfortunately finds little protection among the wooded hills.

The wild flowers also suffer from vandal hands. Many armfuls of them are ruthlessly picked and carried away, preventing further propagation. A human being is only partially emancipated from barbarism, who cannot look upon a beautiful thing without wanting to pick it or kill it. Primitive savagery would not be attracted by beauty at all. Partial development

## INTRODUCTION

of the love of beauty suggests its selfish acquirement, while further enlightenment teaches us to cherish and preserve it. The destruction of the wild flowers, and the use of bird plumage for personal adornment, is modified barbarism. We cannot be fully civilized until we are able to love these beautiful things in their natural habitats, without temptation to injure them.

To the botanist, the country is a treasure house. Almost, if not all, of the flora indigenous to the temperate zone, is found within its borders.

The flowers have a kingdom in the dunes. From the secluded nooks and fertile crevices, from among the shadows of the trees, and along the margins of the marshes and little pools, their silent songs of color go out over the landscapes. In no form is beauty so completely expressed, and in no form is it so accessible to us.

The sketches in this volume are culled from the experiences and reflections of many happy days that were spent in this mystic land. In such a retreat we may find refuge from the town, from the nerve-racking noise and stifling smoke, and from the artificialities and the social illusions that becloud our daily lives. E. H. R.



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE DREAM JEWEL . . . . .	17
II. A ROMANCE OF MT. TOM . . . . .	25
III. THE HERON'S POOL . . . . .	41
IV. THE STORY OF THE STREAM . . . . .	51
V. THE MOON IN THE MARSH . . . . .	67
VI. HOLY ZEKE . . . . .	75
VII. THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL AND ELVIREY SMETTERS . . . . .	107
VIII. THE RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS .	135
IX. THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE . . .	165
X. THE PLUTOCRATS . . . . .	223





## ILLUSTRATIONS

The "Ancient" . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Mt. Tom . . . . .	<i>Facing page</i> 24
The Heron's Pool . . . . .	40
"Omemee" . . . . .	50
The Moon in the Marsh . . . . .	66
"Holy Zeke" . . . . .	74
Mrs. Elvirey Smetters . . . . .	106
Bill Saunders . . . . .	134
The "Bogie House" . . . . .	150
"Na'cissus Jackson" . . . . .	164
The Requiem of the Leaves . . . . .	204
The Game Warden and his Deputy . . . . .	222
On the White Hills . . . . .	236
The Troopers of the Sky . . . . .	270



I

THE DREAM JEWEL





## I

### THE DREAM JEWEL

**T**HE tribe of the sturgeon was speeding southward over the rock-strewn floors of the inland sea. In the van of the swimming host its leader bore a wondrous stone. From it multicolored beams flashed out through the dim waters and into unsounded depths. Shapes, still and ghostly, with waving fins and solemn orbs, stared at the passing glow and vanished. Phantom-like forms faded quickly into dark recesses, and frightened schools of small fish fled away over pale sandy expanses. Clouds of fluttering gulls and terns followed the strange light that gleamed below the waves. Migrating birds, high in the night skies, wheeled with plaintive calls, for this new radiance was not of the world of wings and fins.

The wonder stone was being carried out of the Northland. For ages untold it had reposed in the heart of a stupendous glacier, that crept over the region of the great lakes from the roof of the

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

world — from that vast frozen sea of desolation that is ghastly white and endless — under the corona of the Northern Lights.

From a cavern deep in ice, its prismatic rays had illumined the crystal labyrinths during the slow progress of the monster of the north, grinding and scarring the earth in its path of devastation.

The radiance from the stone was ineffable. Such color may have swept into the heavens on the world's first morning, when the Spirit moved over the face of the waters, or have trembled in the halo at the Creation, when cosmos was evolved out of elemental fires.

It glowed in the awful stillness of its prison, untouched by the primeval storms that raged before the mammoths trod the earth, and before men of the stone age had learned the use of fire.

Many centuries after the greater part of the gigantic ice sheet had yielded to balmy airs, its frowning ramparts lingered along the wild shores of the north. The white silence was broken by reverberations from crumbling masses that crashed down the steeps into the billows that broke against the barrier. In one of the pieces the stone was borne away. The luminous lump drifted with the



## THE DREAM JEWEL

winds. It was nuzzled by curious rovers of the blue waters that rubbed gently along its sides and basked in the refulgence. With the final dissolution of the fragment, the stone was released.

In quest of new feeding grounds, the sturgeon had explored these frigid depths, and, after privation and fruitless wanderings, had gathered for the long retreat to a warmer clime. Their leader beheld the blazing gem falling, like a meteor, before him. With fateful instinct he seized it and moved grimly on. The gray horde saw the light from afar and streamed after it, as warriors might have followed the banner of a hero.

Through many miles of dark solitudes the bearer of the stone led his adventurous array. Swiftly moving fins took the sturgeon to waters where nature had been more merciful.

The roaring surf lines of the southern shore washed vast flat stretches of sand that were bleak and sterile, for no living green relieved the monotonous wilds.

A few Indians had been driven by warfare into this dreary land. Their wigwams were scattered along the coast, where they eked out a precarious existence from the spoil of the waters.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

When the sturgeon came their lives were quickened with new energy. With their bark canoes and stone spears they found many victims among the tired fish. A wrinkled prophet, who had communed with the gods of his people, in a dream, had foretold the sending of a luminous stone, by a sturgeon, that would mark the beginning of an era of prosperity and happiness for his tribe. There was rejoicing when the lustre was seen among the waves. In the belief that the promised gift of the manitous had come, and the prophecy was fulfilled, the big fish was pursued with eagerness and finally captured. The long-awaited prize was carried in triumph to the lodge of the chief. The red men gathered in solemn council, and honors were heaped upon the aged seer whose vision had become true. After long deliberation, Flying Fawn, the loveliest maiden of the tribe, was appointed keeper of the stone. The lithe and beautiful barbarian child of nature clasped it to her budding breast, and departed into the wastes. With an invocation to her gods for its protection, she hid their precious gift far beyond the reach of prying eyes.

The winds carried myriads of flying grains to

## THE DREAM JEWEL

the chosen spot. They came in thin veils and little spirals over the barrens, and gathered, with many sweeps and swirls, into the mound that rose over the resting place of the stone. The army of the silent sands had become its guardian, for nevermore was its hiding place known.

The winds and the years sculptured the shifting masses into strange and bewildering forms. Trees, grasses, and flowers grew, and the hilltops were crowned with perennial garlands. The green sanctuaries were filled with melody. The forests teemed with game and the red men were in a land of plenty.

The Country of the Dunes had come into being. Somewhere deep in its bosom shines the Dream Jewel. Like "The Great Carbuncle," its fervid splendor beams from a fount unknown. Its iridescence flashes from the distant dunes at sunset. It is in the twilight afterglows, on the sapphire waters of the lake on summer days, and in the fairylands that are pictured in the pools. It glorifies dull winter landscapes with skies of infinite hues, and glances from twisted trunks of ancient pines on hills that defy the storms. It pulsates in star reflections that haunt the margins of wet

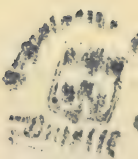


## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

sands, and where crescent moons touch the waves that toss on night horizons. Its tinge is in the tender leaves and petals of the springtime, and in the flush of autumn's robes. We see its elusive tints through vistas in the dusk, and in the purple mystery that fills the shadowy places, for the Dream Jewel is Beauty, and they who know not its holy light must walk in darkness.

II

A ROMANCE OF MT. TOM









"MT. TOM"

*(From the Author's Etching)*



## II

### A ROMANCE OF MT. TOM

**B**EFORE strangers came into the land, bringing with them a prosiac nomenclature, there was no Mt. Tom. When the early white explorers crossed the southern end of Lake Michigan in their frail canoes, they saw, from far out on the water, dim irregular filaments of yellow that stretched along the horizon. There was a bold accent in the far-flung line of distant coast, an ancient landmark of a primitive race. The noble promontory that lifted its royal brow from among the contours of the sand hills — the monarch of the range — was called Wud-ju-na-gow, or Sand Mountain, by the red men.

Its top was the highest point along the great sweep of shore that bordered the country of the dunes. In past centuries its sand had been slowly piled by the shifting winds. Eventually the sand grasses rooted themselves, and, in succeeding years, the trees grew. Wud-ju-na-gow became a "fixed dune," no longer subject to the caprices of the winds.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

The slopes were robed with vegetation. Stately pines, spruces, and cedars flourished among the dense forest growth that reached almost to the summit. Here the trees were smaller, and bare patches of yellow were visible against the skyline, from which wispy wreaths of sand would spiral up in the air currents on windy days.

In the autumn the groups of green conifers made dark accents in the expanse of red and gold that draped Wud-ju-na-gow's massive form. Flowers grew lavishly along the steep slopes. The wild life sought refuge in the impassable thickets and tall timber. Hawks and eagles soared above the woods with watchful eyes and dropped down into them for furtive prey. Hordes of noisy crows circled over the tree-tops and around the wind-swept summit. Wolves and other marauders crept stealthily through the undergrowth at night. Startled deer leaped from quiet hiding places and fled from suspicious sounds and odors. Partridges thrived in the patches of brush and tangled grape-vines, in spite of many enemies. Beady eyes peered out from under fallen trunks. The hunters and the hunted followed their destinies among the shadows.

## A ROMANCE OF MT. TOM

A Pottawattomie village had flourished for many years on a low ridge back of the hills, near Wud-ju-na-gow. Just below the village a small creek, fed by springs, wound through the open woods and reached the lake through a deep ravine. The high hills protected the lodges from the north winds and violent storms from the lake. About sixty bark wigwams were strung along the ridge.

The young men hunted through the hills and usually had no difficulty in keeping the village supplied with meat. They carried their birch-bark canoes through the ravine to the lake and varied the food supplies with sturgeon and other fish. In times of plenty the game and fish not needed for immediate use were smoked and stored for winter consumption. Small patches of corn were scattered through the fertile open spaces away from the creek. The women gossiped over their domestic concerns, the men loitered along the hillside, and the little community lived in peace, with no troubles but those that nature has laid upon all her children. In their uncivilized state they were spared the miseries of temperament, and the refined tortures, as well as the joys, of more highly developed mentality. Their primi-

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

tive needs were provided for. Food was abundant and the red men were contented — if there be real contentment in the world.

After a long period of prosperity there came a summer of drought. Pitiless heat and breathless skies shrivelled the leaves, dried up the streams and ponds, and brought suffering to the live things. In the autumn the parched land had yielded up its vibrant life. Instead of the mellow golds and crimsons, there were grays and neutral browns. The voices of the forest were hushed. The fall flowers did not come. The willows and tall grasses drooped in sorrow, for a blight had come upon the land. Day after day the blood-red sun went below the sharp rim of the horizon without promise to the faded hills.

Smoke appeared far in the southwest and a black pall crept into the sky overhead. Before many hours there was a vague unrest in the woods. There were strange noises among the withered trees and dried marshes. The wild life was fleeing eastward. At night a baleful glare tinged the crests of the dunes and reflected from swiftly moving wings above them.

With the coming of the wind stifling smoke

## A ROMANCE OF MT. TOM

crept through the woods. Soon the crackling lines of flame came, writhing and roaring through the dry timber. There were muffled cries from tiny furred fugitives in the matted grasses in the low places. Noble landscapes were being scourged by demons. Nature's cool cloisters and her dream cathedrals were on fire.

There is a heart-felt grief that comes with the burning of the trees. The sacrilege of their destruction touches us more deeply if we have lived among them, and learned that with them have been builded the real kingdoms of the earth. In them we may find reflection of all human emotion, and for the subtly attuned soul, they have emotion of their own.

The terrified dwellers along the creek fled to the beach, and, with awe-stricken faces watched the march of the flames through the country. They saw the flashes from the cedars, pines, and spruces shoot high into clouds of smoke and flying sparks, and heard the crackling of countless trunks and branches that quivered in torment on the blazing hills.

By some fortuitous chance — perhaps a temporary veering of the air currents — the ravine,



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

through which the little creek found its way, was spared. A portion of the timber on the slopes of Wud-ju-na-gow was also untouched, but everywhere else was desolation. The blackened and smouldering expanse carried dismay into the hearts of the horror-stricken groups huddled near the mouth of the stream. Most of their primitive belongings had been rescued, but their future looked as dark as the grim landscapes around them.

It was late in the season. The fishing in the lake had been unusually poor, and there was no living thing among the forest ruins that could be used for food. The stores that had been saved would last but a short time and there was an appalling fear of famine.

Many anxious hours were spent in deliberation. Believing that Omnipotent wrath had destroyed everything except the sands and the waters of the lake, the bewildered Indians saw no ray of hope. The calamity had fallen with crushing force. The vengeance of evil gods was upon them. Their few frail canoes could not carry all of them on the lake. The range of smoking hills that swept away along the curving beach-lines seemed to offer no path of refuge.

## A ROMANCE OF MT. TOM

Young Wa-be-no-je had listened intently to all of the discussions, and had pondered deeply over the desperate straits of his people. He bore the Indian name of the white marsh hawk. He was nearly nineteen. His proud father, a shrewd old hunter and trapper, had taught him the craft and lore of the woods. He sat near little Taheta, the playmate of his childhood. With ripening years love had come into their lives. Before the great fire they had begun to talk of a wigwam of their own, but now that dark hours had come they knew that they would have to wait.

Wa-be-no-je rose from a log on which they had been sitting, near a group of the older men, stepped forward and volunteered to follow the fire and find the game. With care the scant supply of food would be sufficient to support his companions for two moons. If he did not return by the end of that time they would understand that his quest had failed.

A few simple preparations were made for his journey. With forebodings in her heart, with love light shining through her tears, little Taheta saw him depart into the charred wastes on his errand of salvation. No mailed knight ever rode out

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

upon the path to glory with brighter eyes upon him than those that glowed under the long lashes of the Pottawattomie maiden, as she gazed longingly after him from the edge of the ravine. She watched his lithe, sinewy figure as he bravely strode away and faded into the distance. She went back in sorrow and began with the others to endure patiently the long wait and suspense which they knew was inevitable before the hunter's return.

It was agreed that every night at sundown a fire should be built on the lofty top of Wud-ju-nagow, and kept burning until dawn, during Wa-beno-je's absence. If he was where he could see this light, he would know that his people were still in the ravine, and in the darkness it would take the place of burned landmarks to guide him on his return journey. Ten members of the little band, including Taheta, were to perform this duty, and each night one of them climbed the zigzag trail to the sandy top, kindled the beacon fire, watched and replenished it until sunrise, and returned.

From miles away the young hunter could see the tiny light against the sky. When its glow

## A ROMANCE OF MT. TOM

was very bright he knew that one he loved was near it. He tramped on through the ashes and débris for many days. At night he climbed to some high spot and slept. One afternoon he reached a sandy stretch where the trees were scattered and there were few grasses. The wind had evidently lulled when the fire reached this area for the burnt places ended. He began to find the game trails leading from them, which he followed for several days. The signs became fresher, and one morning his eyes were gladdened by the sight of deer and buffalo peacefully grazing beyond a small river that he had never seen before.

Fearing that the animals might move on and be beyond reach before he could return and obtain help, he decided to kill as many as possible and preserve and hide the meat. Its transportation would then be a comparatively simple matter, and he was sure that he could secure enough for the winter's supply.

He set cautiously to work. The noiseless arrows brought down one of the buffalo and a deer the first day. He killed no more until this meat was cut into little strips, strung on many switches, smoked over fires of dried leaves and dead wood,



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

and thoroughly dried in the sun. He enlarged a small cave under some rocks by digging away the sand. He made a floor of dead leaves inside on which to pile his stores, and carefully walled up the opening with stones to protect the precious contents from the wolves and other prowlers. The game was gradually moving away, but before it disappeared the cave was well filled and there was more than enough to last his people for a year.

The long dry period was now broken by a heavy rain storm which lasted for several days. The arid earth drank of the falling waters; the blackness and ruin upon the land were washed as with tears of atonement. The streams again flowed and the pools and marshes that give life and joy to the wild things were filled.

When the skies cleared Wa-be-no-je piled more rocks over the entrance to the cave and started homeward with a light heart. Weary miles were traversed before he could see the faint light on the horizon against the sky at night. During two nights he heard wolves howling in the distance, and the next night they were much closer. They gradually closed in toward him and he knew that danger had come. He had but two good arrows.

## A ROMANCE OF MT. TOM

The others were lost or broken. He came to a small stream and waded it for a mile or so to throw his hungry followers off his trail, but they soon found it again. Yellow eyeballs reflected his firelight while he slept. Once he loosed one of the precious arrows to save his life. The pack immediately fell upon their wounded comrade and devoured him. Their hunger was only partially appeased and they kept close to Wa-be-no-je until the following evening. He knew that unless he could find some means of shaking them off he would never see Taheta or his people again. He decided to attempt to pick his way through the end of a wide marsh, believing that his pursuers would not follow him into the water. If he could get safely across, he would be able to elude them.

The swamp was full of quaking bogs, and near the middle the water was quite deep. His progress was impeded by the soft mud and decayed vegetation on the bottom, and the further he went the chances became more desperate. One foot sank suddenly in the soft ooze and then the other. He could neither retreat nor go ahead. He had reached a mass of quicksand, and with every attempt to extricate himself he sank a little lower.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

He clutched the ends of a few sodden grasses and held them for some time, but the stagnant murky waters slowly closed over him and he was gone.

The baffled wolves howled along the margins of the marsh for a while but soon disappeared, like all enemies whose quarry has met finality. The little fire on the horizon flared up brightly, as though fresh sticks had been piled upon it, and gleamed through the darkness brighter than ever before. It faded away in the gray of the morning and its watcher followed the steep trail down the side of Wud-ju-na-gow to rest.

Wa-be-no-je's silent departure from the world left hardly a ripple in the marsh. It is human to cherish the hope, or fondly believe, that some store of gold, or grandeur of achievement — some sculptured monument, or service to mankind — will stand at our place of exit and be eloquent while the ages last, but the Waters of Oblivion hide well their secrets. Beneath them are neither pride nor vanity. The primordial slime from which we came reclaims without pomp or jewelled vesture, and if there be a Great Beyond, poor Wa-be-no-je may reach it from the quicksand as safely as he who becomes dust within marble walls.

## A ROMANCE OF MT. TOM

The early snows came and the nightly fires on Wud-ju-na-gow still glowed. Only one guardian sat beside them, for Wa-be-no-je's people now believed that he would never return. Hope still abided in Taheta's loyal heart, and night after night she climbed the shelving steeps and built her fire. One cold, stormy night she sat huddled in her blanket and listened to the north wind. The snow swirled around her and toward morning the light was gone. The next day they found the rigid little form in the blanket and buried it below the ashes of her fire.

Today the Fireweed, that ever haunts the burnt places, lifts its slender stalk above the spot, and it may be that the soul of faithful Taheta lurks among the tender pink blossoms — a halo that may be seen from the dark waters of the distant marsh.





III  
THE HERON'S POOL





THE HERON'S POOL

*(From the Author's Etching)*





### III

#### THE HERON'S POOL

**T**HE pool was far back from the big marshes through which the lazy current of the river wound. It was in one of those secluded nooks that the seeping water finds for itself when it would hide in secret retreats and form a little world of its own. It was bordered by slushy grasses and small willows; its waters spread silently among the bulrushes, lily pads and thick brush tangles. A few ghostly sycamores and poplars protruded above the undergrowth, and the intricate network of wild grapevines concealed broken stumps that were mantled with moss. The placid pool was seldom ruffled, for the dense vegetation protected it from the winds. Wandering clouds were mirrored in its limpid depths. Water-snakes made silvery trails across it. Sinister shadows of hawks' wings sometimes swept by, and often the splash of a frog sent little rings out over the surface. Opalescent dragon-flies hovered among the weeds and small turtles basked in the sun-light along the margins.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

The Voices of the Little Things were in this abode of tranquillity — the gentle sounds that fill nature's sanctuaries with soft music. There were contented songs of feathered visitors, distant cries of crows beyond the tree-tops, faint echoes of a cardinal, rejoicing in the deep woods, and the drowsy hum of insects — the myriad little tribes that sing in the unseen aisles of the grasses.

One spring a gray old heron winged his way slowly over the pool, and, after a few uncertain turns over the trees, wearily settled among the rushes. After stalking about in the labyrinth of weeds along the shallow edges for some time, he took his station on a dead branch that protruded from the water near the shore, and solemnly contemplated his surroundings.

His plumage was tattered, and he bore the record of the years he had spent on the marshy wastes along the river. His eye had lost its lustre, and the delicate blue that had adorned the wings of his youth had faded to a pale ashen gray. The tired pinions were slightly frayed — the wings hung rather loosely in repose, and the lanky legs carried scars and crusty gray scales that told of vicissitudes in the battle for existence. He looked

## THE HERON'S POOL

long and curiously at a round white object on the bottom near his low perch. The round object had a history, but its story did not come within the sphere of the heron's interests, and he returned to his meditations on the gnarled limb. He may have dreamed of far-off shores and happy homes in distant tree-tops. A memory of a mate that flew devotedly by his side, but could not go all the way, may have abided with him. The peace of windless waters brooded in this quiet haven. It was a refuge from the storms and antagonisms of the outer world, its store of food was abundant, and in it he was content to pass his remaining days.

When night came his still figure melted into the darkness. A fallen luna moth, whose wet wings might faintly reflect the starlight, would sometimes tempt him, and he would listen languidly to the lonely cries of an owl that lived in one of the sycamores. The periodic visits of coons and foxes, that prowled stealthily in the deep shadows, and craftily searched the wet grasses for small prey, did not disturb him. They well knew the power of the gray old warrior's cruel bill. All his dangerous enemies were far



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

away. The will-o'-the-wisps that spookily and fitfully hovered along the tops of the rushes, and the erratic flights of the fire-flies, did not mar his serenity. He was spending his old age in comfort and repose.

There is a certain air, or quality, about certain spots which is indefinable. An elusive and intangible impression, an idea, or a story, may become inseparably associated with a particular place. With a recurrence of the thought, or the memory of the story there always comes the involuntary mental picture of the physical environment with which it is interwoven. This association of thought and place is in most cases entirely individual, and is often a subtle sub-consciousness — more of a relationship of the soul, than the mind, to such an environment. Something in or near some particular spot that imparts a peculiar and distinctive character to it, or inspires some dominant thought or emotion, constitutes the “genius” of that place. The Genius of the Place may be a legend, an unwritten romance, a memory of some event, an imaginary apparition, an unaccountable sound, the presence of certain flowers or odors, a deformed tree, a strange in-

## THE HERON'S POOL

habitant, or any thought or thing that would always bring it to the mind.

When the heron came to the pool the Genius of the Place was old Topago, a chief of the Pottawattomies. A great many years ago he lived in a little hut, rudely built of logs and elm bark, on an open space a few hundred feet from the pool. The fortunes of his tribe had steadily declined, and their sun was setting. After the coming of the white man, war and sickness had decimated his people. The wild game began to disappear and hunger stalked among the little villages. The old chief brooded constantly over the sorrows of his race. As the years rolled on his melancholy deepened. He sought isolation in the deep woods and built his lonely dwelling near the pool to pass his last years in solitude. His was the anguish of heart that comes when hope has fled. Occasionally one of the few faithful followers who were left would come to the little cabin and leave supplies of corn and dried meat, but beyond this he had no visitors. His contact with his tribe had ceased.

One stormy night, when the north wind howled around the frail abode, and the spirits of the cold

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

were sighing in the trunks of the big trees, the aged Indian sat over his small fire and held his medicine bag in his shrivelled hands. Its potent charm had carried him safely through many perils, and he now asked of it the redemption of his people. That night the wind ceased and he felt the presence of his good manitous in the darkness. They told him that the magic of his medicine was still strong. If he would watch the reflections in the pool, there would sometime appear among them the form of a crescent moon that would foretell a great change in the fortunes of his race, but he must see the reflection with his own eyes.

In the spring, as soon as the ice had melted, he began his nightly vigils at the foot of an ancient pine that overhung the water. Through weary years he gazed with dimmed eyes upon the infinite and inscrutable lights that gleamed and trembled in the pool. Many times he saw the new moon shine in the twilights of the west, and saw the old crescent near the horizon before the dawn, but no crescent was ever reflected from the zenith into the still depths below. Only the larger moons rode into the night skies above him. His aching heart fought with despair and distrust of his

## THE HERON'S POOL

tribal gods. The wrinkles deepened on his wan face. The cold nights of spring and fall bent the decrepit figure and whitened the withered locks. Time dealt harshly with the faithful watcher, nobly guarding his sacred trust.

One spring a few tattered shreds of a blanket clung to the rough roots. Heavy snow masses around the pine had slipped into the pool sometime during the winter, and carried with them a helpless burden. The melting ice had let it into the sombre depths below. The birds sang as before, the leaves came and went, and Mother Nature continued her eternal rhythm.

During a March gale the ancient pine tottered and fell across the open water. In the grim procession of the years it became sodden and gradually settled into the oozy bottom. Only the gnarled and decayed branch — the perch of the old heron — remained above the surface.

One night in early fall, when there was a tinge of frost in the air, and the messages of the dying year were fluttering down to the water from the overhanging trees, the full moon shone resplendent directly above the pool. The old heron turned his tapering head up toward it for a mo-



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

ment, plumed his straggling feathers for a while, nonchalantly gazed at the white skull that caught the moon's light below the water near his perch, and relapsed into immobility. A rim of darkness crept over the edge of the moon, and the earth's shadow began to steal slowly across the silver disk. The soft beams that glowed on the trees and grasses became dimmed and they retreated into the shadows. The darkened orb was almost eclipsed. Only a portion of it was left, but far down in the chill mystery of the depths of the pool, among countless stars, was reflected a crescent moon.

The magic of Topago's medicine was still potent. The hour for the redemption of the red man had come, but he was no more. The mantle of the Genius of the Place had fallen upon the old heron. He was the keeper of the secret of his pool.

IV

THE STORY OF THE STREAM









#### IV

### THE STORY OF THE STREAM

**T**HE bistre-colored waters of French Creek seep sluggishly out of the ancient peat beds far away in the country back of the dunes. Countless tiny rivulets of transparent golden brown creep through the low land among the underbrush and mingle with the gentle current that whispers in the deep grasses, ripples against decayed branches and fallen trunks, hides under masses of gnarled roots and projecting banks, and enters the long sinuous ravine that winds through the woods and sand-hills. The ravine ends abruptly at the broad shore of the lake. The stream spreads out over the beach and tints the incoming surf with wondrous hues.

In the daytime occasional gleams of light from the gliding water can be seen through the small openings in the labyrinths of undergrowth and between the tall tree trunks that crowd the shadowy defile. At night there are tremulous reflections of the moon among the thick foliage.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

Strange ghostly beams touch the boles of the solemn pines and sycamores and filter into the sombre recesses.

The dramas of human life leave romance behind them. Its halo hovers over these darkened woods, for it was here that the beautiful Indian girl, Omemee, was brought by her dusky Pottawattomie lover, in the moon of falling leaves, and it was here that the threads of their fate were woven nearly a hundred years ago.

Red Owl first saw her among the wild blackberry bushes near the village of her people. She had responded to his entreaties with shy glances, and after many visits and much negotiation, her father, a wrinkled old chief, had consented to their union. Omemee's savage charms had brought many suitors to her father's wigwam. Her graceful willowy figure, long raven hair, musical voice, dark luminous eyes and gentle ways had made her a favorite of her village. She was called the dove in the language of her tribe. There was sorrow when she went away.

Red Owl's prowess as a hunter, his skill in the rude athletic sports of the village, displayed on his frequent visits during the wooing, had won

## THE STORY OF THE STREAM

the admiration of the old warrior. Among the many bundles of valuable pelts that were borne along the Great Sauk Trail to the traders' posts, the largest were usually those of Red Owl. The fire-water of the white man did not lure him to disaster as it did many of his red brothers. He always transacted his business quickly and returned from the posts with the ammunition, traps and other supplies for which he had exchanged his furs.

For a year he quietly accumulated a secret hoard of selected skins, which he laid before the door of the fond father as the marriage offering. The lovers disappeared on the trail that was to lead them to their home. For five days they travelled through the dunes and primeval forests. They came down the trail that crossed French Creek, climbed out of the ravine, and entered the village of Red Owl's people. The wigwams were scattered along the stretch of higher ground among the trees. Omemee was cordially welcomed and soon grew accustomed to her new environment.

For many years the young men of the tribe had trapped muskrats, beaver and mink along the



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

creek and in the swamps beyond its headwaters. Small furred animals were abundant for many miles around, and, during the fur season, the trappers were dispersed over a wide extent of territory.

When "Peg Leg" Carr came into the dune country the only human trails he found were those of the red men. He came alone and built a cabin on the creek not far from the Indian village. Peg Leg may have still cherished a secret longing for human society which he was not willing to admit, even to himself. He had abandoned his last habitat for the ostensible reason that "thar was too many people 'round." He came from about a hundred miles back on the Sauk Trail. After a family disagreement he had left his wife and two sons to their own devices in the wilderness, and was not heard of for nearly ten years. He suddenly appeared one morning, stump-ing along the trail, with his left knee fitted to the top of a hickory support. The lower part of the leg was gone, and he explained its absence by declaring that it had been "bit off." The time-worn pleasantry seemed to amuse him, and no amount of coaxing would elicit further details.

## THE STORY OF THE STREAM

There was a deep ugly scar in the left side of his neck. His vocal chords had been injured and he could talk only in hoarse whispers. He said that his throat had been "gouged out." Somebody or something had nearly wrecked Peg Leg physically, but the story, whatever it was, remained locked in his bosom. He admitted that he had "been to sea," but beyond that no facts were obtainable.

After a brief sojourn at his old home he shouldered his pack and started west. When he arrived at French Creek he spent several days in looking the country over before deciding on the location of his cabin. He was a good-natured old fellow and the Indians did not particularly resent his intrusion, even when he began to set a line of traps along the creek. The small animals were so numerous that one trapper more or less made little difference, and he got on very well with his red neighbors. They rather pitied his infirmities and were disposed to make allowances. He was over seventy and apparently harmless.

When the old man had accumulated a small stock of pelts it was his custom to carry them to a trading post located about forty miles back on the trail and exchange them for supplies for his

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

simple housekeeping and other necessities. These trips often consumed ten days, as his loads were heavy and he was compelled to travel slowly. On his return, when he came to the rude log bridge over which the trail crossed the creek in the ravine, he would sometimes wearily lay his pack down and pound on the timbers with his hickory stump as a signal to those above. He was unable to reach them with his impaired voice. Somebody in the wigwams usually heard him and came down to help the exhausted old trapper carry his burden up the steep incline. After resting awhile he would trudge on to his cabin.

A few years after the advent of Peg Leg a troop of soldiers arrived and built a fort. For strategic reasons the commander of the government post at Detroit decided to keep a small garrison at the end of the lake. A spot was cleared on the bluff and two small brass cannon were mounted in the block-house inside the log stockade. The tops of the surrounding trees were cut away so that the guns would command the trail from where it entered the north side of the ravine to the point at which it disappeared around a low hill south of the fort.

## THE STORY OF THE STREAM

The French Creek Trail was a branch of the Great Sauk Trail, which was the main thoroughfare from the Detroit post to the mouth of Chicago river. It was joined near the headwaters of the St. Joseph and Kankakee rivers, in what is now northeastern Indiana, by another trail that followed the north banks of the Kankakee from the Illinois country. The sinuous routes had been used from time immemorable. They were the established highways of the red men and the arteries of their simple commerce. Thousands of moccasined feet traversed them on peaceful errands, and grim war parties sometimes moved swiftly along the numberless forest paths that connected with the main trails. There was a net-work of these all through the Indian country. Trees twisted and bent in a peculiar way, which we now often see in the woods, were landmarks left by the makers of various small trails that were travelled infrequently.

Soon after the fort was built at French Creek, Pierre Chenault came and established a trading post near the village. He was followed by a number of settlers who built log houses along the edge of the bluff. The red man's fatherland was invaded. The civilization of the white man — or



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

the lack of it — had come, with its attending evils of strong waters and organized rapacity. The waves of an alien race, with strange tongues and new weapons of steel, had broken over him. His means of subsistence dwindled. His heritage was passing to the sway of the despoiler.

The Indians loitered around Pierre Chenault's trading post, bartered their few valuables for fire-water, and neglected the pursuits that had made them happy and prosperous. Chenault was a half-breed. His father belonged to that hardy race of French-Canadian voyageurs who had broken the paths of the wilderness in the north country, and penetrated the fastnesses of the territory of the Great Lakes and the Mississippi. His mother was an Ojibwa on the south shore of Lake Superior. He was about forty, with a lean and hardened frame. His straight black hair was beginning to be streaked with gray, and fell to his shoulders. Piercing eyes looked out from under the heavy brows with an expression of low cunning, and his face carried the stamp of villainy. He was a mongrel, and in his case the mixture was a failure. He inherited the evil traits of both races and none of the virtues of either.

## THE STORY OF THE STREAM

The creek was now practically abandoned as a trapping ground by the Indians. With the exception of Red Owl and Peg Leg, who divided the few miles of the stream, the trappers had sought other regions that were less disturbed. The dwellers in the wigwams contemplated a general removal to a more congenial habitat. Their neighbors were getting too numerous for comfort, and their ways of life were meeting with too much interference. They did not object to Peg Leg, but he was all of their white brothers that they felt they needed.

As the fur grew scarcer Red Owl rather resented the rivalry of the old man's interests, and occasionally appropriated an otter or mink, when he passed Peg Leg's traps, and had found nothing in his own. He probably lulled his conscience with the idea that the animals naturally belonged to the Indians, and that Peg Leg's privileges were a form of charity that need not be extended to the point of his own self-denial.

Many times the half-breed had looked longingly on the quiet-eyed Omemee when she came to his post. He coveted Red Owl's savage jewel. Wickedness fermented in his depraved mind, but he was too wise to make advances. He knew of Red

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

Owl's surreptitious visits to Peg Leg's traps and laid his plans with far-seeing craft. One still February morning he saw him go into the ravine and start up the creek on the ice. He seized his rifle and crept through the thick timber and undergrowth, away from the creek, paralleling the course taken by the unsuspecting Indian. After going a mile or so Red Owl stopped near the projecting roots of a large elm. One of Peg Leg's traps was there and his rival was soon engaged in killing and extracting a mink from the steel jaws of the trap. The half-breed stole up to within a hundred yards. A report rang in the crisp air and a bullet crashed into the back of the Indian's head. The murderer left no trail near the frozen creek. He made a wide detour, returned to his post, after hiding his rifle in the snow, and awaited results.

A couple of hours later Peg Leg hobbled along the white water course to inspect his traps. He followed Red Owl's trail and came upon the still form lying in the blood-stained snow on the ice. He speculated for some time over the mystery and went to the settlement to report what he had found.

## THE STORY OF THE STREAM

The broken-hearted Omemee went with those who departed for the scene of the tragedy. No trail was visible except those of Red Owl and Peg Leg. The old man's tracks were easily recognized. His denial of any guilty knowledge of the killing was met by silence and dark looks. Circumstantial evidence was against him. The motive was obvious and the story was on the snow. The partial justice of the retribution that had mysteriously fallen upon the thief did not lessen the innocent old trapper's sorrow and fear, for he knew that justice, age, or infirmity would be no bar to Indian revenge. He would never have killed Red Owl for interfering with his traps. A high wind and a snow storm came up in the afternoon that effectually baffled any further investigation. The despondent old man kept the seclusion of his cabin and brooded over his trouble for several weeks.

Red Owl was laid away after the customs of his people. Omemee departed into the wilderness to mourn for her dead. After many days she returned with the light in her eyes that gleams from those of the she-panther when her young have been killed before her — a light that an enemy sees but once.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

In the spring Peg Leg left with his pack of winter pelts. He had once been cheated by Chenault and preferred to do his trading where he had gone before the half-breed came. His journey consumed nearly two weeks. One evening at dusk he laboriously picked his way down the steep path into the ravine, laid his load of supplies on the rude bridge, and then signalled for help by pounding the bridge timbers with his hickory stump. He was worn out and could not carry his burden up the steep incline alone.

Like a snake from its covert, a beautiful wild thing darted from the deep shadows of the pines. The moccasined feet made no sound on the logs. There was a gleam of steel, a lightning-like movement, and Omemee glided on out of the ravine into the gathering gloom. The silence was broken by a heavy splash below the side of the bridge, and when they found poor old Peg Leg the hilt of a knife protruded from between his shoulders.

There was a hidden observer of the tragedy. Pierre Chenault had watched long and anxiously for the stroke of Omemee's revenge. The white man's law now gave him a coveted advantage.

## THE STORY OF THE STREAM

He broke cover and pursued the fast retreating figure. He would offer to conduct her to a place of safety, protect her and declare his love.

Omemee ran with the speed of a deer in the direction of the home of her childhood. She fled out over the dunes to the shore of the lake. For miles along the wild wave-washed coast the two dim figures sped in the darkness. Omemee finally dropped from exhaustion. The half-breed carried her in his arms to the foot of the bluff where he built a small fire behind a mass of drift-wood, and sat beside her until the gray of the morning came over the sand-hills. They were now about twelve miles from the settlement. They walked along the beach together for several hours and turned into the dunes.

After the April rains tender leaves unfolded in the trees around the bark wigwam where Omemee was born. The old chief had died two years before, but a faint wreath of smoke ascended softly to the overhanging branches. Fastened above the door was a grisly and uncanny thing that moved fitfully to and fro when the winds blew from the lake. It was the scalp of Pierre Chenault.

With the failure to obtain a government appro-

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

priation for a harbor at City West, the name of the new settlement, the embryo town vanished utterly and became a dream of the past. Its ambitions and crushed hopes are entombed in obscure history. No vestiges of its buildings remain. There are traces of a crude mill race near the place where the now obliterated trail crossed the creek. Around the site of the old fort the trees, whose tops were cut away to clear the range for the six-pounders, have covered their wounds with new limbs that have grown from the mutilated trunks.

Near the roots of a gnarled oak at a bend in the stream Peg Leg's dust has mingled with the black loam, where his spirit may be lulled by the passing waters. When we seem to hear the tapping of the woodpecker on a hidden hollow tree in the depths of the dark ravine, it may be the echoes through the mists of the years of the strokes of the poor old trapper on the timbers of the bridge.

The red man has gone. The currents of human passion that rose and fell along the banks of the little stream have passed into silence. The bistre-colored waters still flow out on the wide expanse of sand and spread their web of romance in the moon-light.

V

THE MOON IN THE MARSH







THE MOON IN THE MARSH

*(From the Author's Etching)*



V

THE MOON IN THE MARSH

THERE is a hazy mist on the horizon where the red rim of the October sun left the sky-line. The twilight of Indian Summer is stealing over the marsh. There is a hush of vibrant voices and a muffled movement of tiny life in the darkened places. Sorrow rests upon the world, for the time of the requiem of the leaves has come. The red arrows are abroad; a flush of crimson is creeping through the forest. An elusive fragrance of fruition is in the air, and a drowsy languor droops the stems and branches.

Royal robes rustle faintly on the hills and in the shadows of the woods. From among the living trees a mighty presence has vanished. A queen who came in green has departed as a nun in gray, and the color fairies have entered the bereaved realm with offerings of red and gold.

A vague unrest troubles the trembling aspens and the little sassafras trees that flock like timid children beyond the sturdy sycamores. The



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

gnarled oaks mutely await the winds of winter on their castanets of cold dead leaves — music of our Mother Earth to which we all must listen until our slumber hour comes.

Through darkening masses of tangled thickets, and over bogs concealed by matted grasses, some soggy and decayed logs, covered with moss and slime, lead out over the wet margin of the tarn to the edge of the clear water. A startled bittern rises clumsily out of the rushes. A pair of wild ducks tower out and glide away over the tree-tops. There are stifled rustlings in the ferns and sedges, and little wings are fluttering furtively among unseen branches. There is a soft splash near the edge of the woods. From out the shadow the curling wake of a muskrat stretches across an open space. A mottled water-snake drops stealthily into a wet labyrinth — the muffled movements cease — and muted echoes of vesper choirs sweeten the solitude that broods over the tarn.

After a period of silence another whirl of pinions overhead heralds the return of the ducks. They circle swiftly and invisibly in the deep shadows — their silhouettes dart across the sky openings, and, with a loud swish, they strike the

## THE MOON IN THE MARSH

water and settle comfortably for the night behind some weedy bogs close to the opposite shore.

In the gathering gloom tiny beams creep into the depths of the water. One by one the starry host begins to twinkle in the inverted canopy of the heavens. The full-orbed silver moon rides into the sky through the delicate lacery of the trees with a flood of soft light. Another disk sinks majestically into the abyss.

The asterisms of the astronomer are in the firmament above, rolling in mighty cycles to the ordered destinies of the spheres, but the stars of Arcady are in the quiet pools, the placid bosoms of gently flowing rivers, and far out in seas that are beyond our ken. They sparkle in the smooth curves of heavy swells on distant deeps, and shine far below coral worlds in ocean depths. These stars are measureless. They gleam in awful profundities and illumine a world of dreams. We may look down to them from the windows of a fair castle in which a noble spirit dwells, but beyond its walls we may not go. There are travellers in that dimly lighted vault, for dark wings blur the points of pallid radiance in swift and silent flight. Eternity is not there, for its con-

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

stellations will tremble and vanish with a passing zephyr on the surface of the pool.

A white web of mist gathers on the water. A phosphorescent trunk in the distance glows with ghostly light. The fluffy movement of the wings of a small owl is visible against a patch of sky, and a moment later the dusky form whisks by in the gloom. Agile bats wheel and plunge noiselessly in pursuit of invisible prey. A few bulrushes in a near-by clump are slightly disturbed. The night life has begun to move in the slough, for it is nature's law that it must kill to live.

The veil of mist thickens — the stars in the depths disappear — the moon's reflection becomes a nebula of pale effulgence, and is finally lost in vaporous obscurity. Like the soft fabric of forgetfulness that time weaves over sorrow, the mist envelopes the tarn. Like wraiths of dead years, filmy wreaths trail tenderly and delicately through the solemn woods. The purple darkness has become gray. A clammy wetness clings to the tall grasses. Beads of crystal on their bending points mirror feeble beams of light, and the heaviness of humidity is upon the boughs and fallen leaves.

The moods of Nature are manifold in expression

## THE MOON IN THE MARSH

and power. In her infinite alchemy she reflects a different ray into every facet of the human soul. She echoes its exaltation, has sweet unguents for its weariness, and leads it upon lofty paths of promise when hope has died. The music of her strings brings forth hidden melodies, and it is with her that we must go if we would reach the heights.

The dark morass becomes a dreamland. Through it stately legions go. Ethereal aisles wind through the trees. Cloudy walls rise along its borders, and beyond them are kingdoms in elf-land where fancy may spin fabrics of gossamer and build mansions remote from earthly being.

There is a life of the soul as well as of the body. We may ponder as to its immortality, but undeniably it is in the present, if not in a state to come. Hope grasps at a shadowy vision of the future that dissolves at our touch. Reason gives only the substance of the present, elusive though it be. We live in a world of illusion, where seeming realities may be but phantoms. We wander in a maze of speculative thought. The paths are intricate and only lead to narrow cells. The Forest Gods that dwell in the high and hidden places speak a



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

language that is without words. The fallen leaf is as eloquent as established dogma or voice of hoary seer. In our own hearts must we find our shrines, for the obscurity beyond the border-land of philosophy is as deep as the mould below the leaves. The multitudes that have come upon the earth and vanished have left no clue.

The key lies at the bottom of the tarn, and the story is in the marsh.

VI  
HOLY ZEKE









## VI

### HOLY ZEKE

*"And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth."* — EZEKIEL 7:9

**A**FTER an industrious day with my sketch book among the dunes, I walked over to the lake shore and looked up the beach toward Sipes's shanty. In the gathering twilight a faint gleam came through the small window. Not having seen my old friend for nearly a year, I decided to pay him a visit. My acquaintance with him had brought me many happy hours as I listened to his reminiscences, some of which are recorded in former stories.

He had been a salt water sailor, and, with his shipmate Bill Saunders, had met with many thrilling adventures. He had finally drifted to the sand-hills, where he had found a quiet refuge after a stormy life. Fishing and hunting small

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

game yielded him a scanty but comparatively happy livelihood. He was a queer, bewhiskered little man, somewhere in the seventies, with many idiosyncrasies, a fund of unconscious humor, much profanity, a great deal of homely philosophy, and with many ideas that were peculiarly his own.

He wore what he called a "hatch" over the place which his right eye formerly occupied, and explained the absence of the eye by telling me that it had been blown out in a gale somewhere off the coast of Japan. He said that "it was glass anyway" and he "never thought much of it." Saunders figured more or less in all of his stories of the sea.

On approaching the nondescript driftwood structure, I heard a stentorian voice, the tones of which the little shanty was too frail to confine, and which seemed to be pitched for the solemn pines that fringed the brink of the dark ravine beyond.

"Now all ye hell-destined sinners that are in this holy edifice, listen to me! Ye who are steeped in sin shall frizzle in the fires o' damnation. The seethin' cauldrons yawn. Ye have deserved the fiery pit an' yer already sentenced to it. Hell is gaping fer this whole outfit. The flames gather

## HOLY ZEKE

an' flash. The fury o' the wrath to come is almost 'ere. Yer souls are damned an' you may all be in hell 'fore tomorrer mornin'. The red clouds o' comin' vengeance are over yer miserable heads. You'll be enveloped in fiery floods fer all eternity — fer millions of ages will ye sizzle. Ye hang by a slender thread. The flames may singe it any minute an' in ye go. Ye have reason to wonder that yer not already in hell! Yer accursed bodies shall be laid on live coals, an' with red-hot pitchforks shall ye be sorted into writhin' piles an' hurled into bottomless pits of endless torment. I'm the scourge o' the Almighty. I'm Ezekiel-seven-nine. This is yer last chance to quit, an' you've got to git in line, an' do it quick if ye want to keep from bein' soused in torrents o' burnin' brimstone, an' have melted metal poured into yer blasphemous throats!"

At this point the door partially opened and a furtive figure slipped out. "Let all them that has hard hearts an' soft heads git out!" roared the voice. The figure moved swiftly toward me and I recognized Sipes.

"Gosh! Is that you? You keep away from that place," he sputtered, as he came up.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

"What seems to be the trouble?" I asked.

"It's Holy Zeke an' he's cussin' the bunch. It looks like we'd all have a gloomy finish. He was up 'ere this mornin' an' ast me if 'e could 'ave a *reevival* in my place tonight. He's 'ad pretty much ev'rythin' else that was loose 'round 'ere, an' like a damn fool I told 'im O. K., an' this is wot I git. I thought it was sump'n else. You c'n go an' listen to 'is roar if you want to, but I got some business to 'tend to 'bout ten miles from 'ere, an' I wont be back 'till tomorrer, an' w'en I come back it'll be by water. I'm goin' to lay fer that ol' skeet with my scatter gun, an' he'll think he's got hot cinders under 'is skin w'en I git to 'im. I'll give 'im all the hell I can without murderin' 'im." Sipes then disappeared into the gloom, muttering to himself.

His "scatter gun" was a sinister weapon. It had once been a smooth-bore army musket. The barrel had been sawed off to within a foot of the breach. It was kept loaded with about six ounces of black powder, and, wadded on top of this, was a handful of pellets which the old man had made of flour dough, mixed with red pepper, and hardened in the sun. He claimed that, at three rods,

## HOLY ZEKE

such a charge would go just under the skin. "It wouldn't kill nothin', but it 'ud be hot stuff."

I sat on a pile of driftwood for some time and waited for the turmoil in the shanty to subside. Finally the door opened and four more figures emerged. I was glad to recognize my old friend "Happy Cal," whom I had not seen since his mysterious departure from the sand-hills several years ago, after his dispute with Sipes over some tangled set-lines. Evidently the two old derelicts had amicably adjusted their differences, and Cal had rejoined the widely scattered colony. Another old acquaintance, "Catfish John," was also in the party. After greetings were exchanged, John introduced me to a short stocky man with gray whiskers.

"Shake hands with Bill Saunders," said he.

This I did with pleasure, as Sipes's yarns of the many exploits of this supposedly mythical individual invested him with much interest.

"This 'ere's Ezekiel-seven-nine," continued John, indicating the remaining member of the quartette.

I offered "Ezekiel-seven-nine" my hand, but it was ignored. He looked at me sternly. "Yer

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

smokin' a vile an' filthy weed," said he. "It defiles yer soul an' yer body. It's an abomination in the sight o' the Lord. Yer unclean to my touch." With that he turned away.

I glanced at his hands and if anything could be "unclean" to them its condition must be quite serious. I quite agreed with him, but from a different standpoint, that the cigar was "an abomination," and, after a few more doubtful whiffs, I threw it away, as I had been tempted to do several times after lighting it. Its purchase had proved an error of judgment.

Zeke's impressions of me were evidently not very favorable. He walked away a short distance and stopped. In the dim light I could see that he was regarding us with disapproval. He took no part in the conversation. He finally seated himself on the sand and gazed moodily toward the lake for some time, probably reflecting upon the unutterable depravity of his present associates, and calculating their proximity to eternal fire.

"Holy Zeke," as Sipes had called him, was about six feet two. His clothes indicated that they had been worn uninterruptedly for a long

## HOLY ZEKE

time. The mass of bushy red whiskers would have offered a tempting refuge for wild mice, and from under his shaggy brows the piercing eyes glowed with fanatic light.

Calvinism had placed its dark and heavy seal upon his soul, and the image of an angry and pitiless Creator enthralled his mind — a God who paves infernal regions with tender infants who neglect theology, who marks the fall of a sparrow, but sends war, pestilence and famine to annihilate the meek and pure in heart.

The wonderful drama of the creation, and the beautiful story of Omnipotent love carried no message for him. Lakes of brimstone and fire awaited all of earth's blindly groping children who failed to find the creed of the self-elect. Notwithstanding the fact that the national governing board of an orthodox church, with plenary powers, convened a few years ago, officially abolished infant damnation, and exonerated and redeemed all infants, who up to that time had been subjected to the fury of Divine wrath, Zeke's doctrine was unaltered. It glowed with undiminished fervor. He was a restless exponent of a vicious and cruel man-made dogma, which was as evil as the pun-



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

ishments it prescribed, and as futile as the rewards it promised.

To me Holy Zeke was an incarnation. His eyes and whiskers bespoke the flames of his theology, and his personality was suggestive of its place in modern thought. His battered plug hat was also Calvinistic. It looked like hades. It was indescribable. One edge of the rim had been scorched, and a rent in the side of the crown suggested the possibility of the escape of volcanic thought in that direction. Like his theology, he had picturesque quality.

If he had been a Mohammedan, his eyes would have had the same gleam, and he would have called the faithful to prayer from a minaret with the same fierce fervor as that with which he conjured up the eternal fires in Sipes's shanty. Had not Calvinism obsessed him, his type of mind might have made him a murderous criminal and outlaw, who, with submarines and poison gas, would deny mercy to mankind, for there was no quality of mercy in those cruel orbs. They were the baleful eyes of the jungle, that coldly regard the chances of the kill. In Holy Zeke's case the kill was the forcible snatching of the quarry from

## HOLY ZEKE

hell, not that he desired its salvation, but was anxious to deprive the devil of it. He had no idea of pointing a way to righteousness. There was no spiritual interest in the individual to be rescued. He was the devil's implacable enemy, and it was purely a matter of successful attack upon the property of his foe. Predestination or preordination did not bother him. He made no distinctions. There was no escape for any human being whose belief differed from his; even the slightest variation from his infallible creed meant the bottomless pit.

Zeke had one redeeming quality. He was not a mercenary. No board of trustees paid him the wages of hypocrisy. He did not arch his brows and fingers and deliver carefully prepared eloquent addresses to the Creator, designed more for the ears of his listeners than for the throne above. He did not beseech the Almighty for private favors, or for money to pay a church debt. He regarded himself as a messenger of wrath, and considered that he was authorized to go forth and smite and curse anything and everything within his radius of action. This radius was restricted to the old derelicts who lived in the little drift-

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

wood shanties along the beach and among the sand-hills. There were but few of them, but the limited scope of Zeke's labors enabled him to concentrate his power instead of diffusing and losing it in larger fields.

Zeke soon left our little party and followed a path up into the ravine. After his departure we built a fire of driftwood, sat around it on the sand, and discussed the "scourge."

"I hate to see anythin' that looks like a fire, after wot we've been up ag'inst tonight," remarked Cal, as he threw on some more sticks, "but as 'e ain't 'ere to chuck us in, I guess we'll be safe if we don't put on too much wood. Where d'ye s'pose 'e gits all that dope? I had a Bible once't, but I didn't see nothin' like that in it. There was a place in it where some fellers got throwed in a fiery furnace an' nothin' happened to 'em at all, an' there was another place where it said that the wicked 'ud have their part in hell fire, but I didn't read all o' the book an' mebbe there's a lot o' hot stuff in it I missed. W'en did you fust see that ol' cuss, John?"

Catfish John contemplated the fire for a while, shifted his quid of "natural leaf," and relighted his

## HOLY ZEKE

pipe. He always said that he "couldn't git no enjoyment out o' tobacco without usin' it both ways."

"He come 'long by my place one day 'bout three years ago," said the old man. "It was Sunday an' 'e stopped an' read some verses out of 'is Bible while I was workin' on my boat. He said the Lord rested on the seventh day, an' I'd go to hell if I didn't stop work on the Sabbath. I told 'im that my boat would go to hell if I didn't fix it, an' they wasn't no other day to do it. Then 'e gave me wot 'e called 'tracks' fer me to read an' went on. The Almighty's got some funny fellers workin' fer 'im. This one's got hell on the brain an' 'e ought to stay out in the lake where it's cool. Ev'ry little while 'e comes 'round an' talks 'bout loaves an' fishes, an' sometimes I give 'im a fish, w'en I have a lot of 'em. He does the loaf part 'imself, fer sometimes 'e sticks 'round fer an hour or two. Then 'e tells me some more 'bout hell an' goes off some'r's, prob'ly to cook 'is fish."

"Sipes must 'a' come back. Let's go over there," suggested Saunders, as he called our attention to the glimmer of a light in the shanty.

As we approached the place the light was extinguished, and a voice called out, "Who's there?"



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

After the identity of the party had been established, and the assurance given that Holy Zeke was not in it, the light reappeared and we were hospitably received.

"Wot did you fellers do with that hell-fire cuss?" demanded Sipes when we were all seated in the shanty. "Look wot's 'ere!" and he picked up a small, greasy hymn book which the orator had forgotten in the excitement. Sipes handed me the book. I opened it at random and read:

*"Not all the blood of beasts, on Jewish altars slain,  
Can give the guilty conscience peace, or wash away  
the stain."*

"Gimme that!" yelled Sipes, and I heard the little volume strike the sand somewhere out in the dark near the water. "Wot d'ye s'pose I got this place fer if it ain't to have peace an' quiet 'ere, an' wot's this red-headed devil comin' 'round 'ere fer an' fussin' me all up tell'n' me where I'm goin' w'en I die, w'en I don't give a whoop where I go when I die. That feller's bunk an' don't you fergit it, an' 'e's worse'n that, fer look 'ere wot I found in that basket where I had about two pounds o' salt pork!"

## HOLY ZEKE

He produced a piece of soiled and crumpled paper, on which were scrawled the following quotations: "Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcass shall ye not touch. They are unclean to you" (Leviticus 11:8). "Curséd shall be thy basket and thy store" (Deuteronomy 28:17).

"It's all right fer 'im to cuss my basket if 'e wants to, but I ain't got no store. I'll bet 'e frisked that hunk o' pork an' chucked in them texts 'fore you fellers got 'ere an' I got in off'n the lake. It was in 'is big coat pocket all the time he was makin' that hot spiel, an' that's w'y 'e didn't 'ave no room fer 'is hymn book. He's swiped my food an' I can't fry them texts, an' you fellers are all in on it fer I was goin' to cook the pork an' we'd all have sump'n to eat. He cert'nly spread hell 'round 'ere thick tonight. Some day he'll be yellin' fer ice all right. Who are them Leviticus an' Deuteronomy fellers anyhow? They ain't no friends o' mine!

"I'm weary o' that name o' Zekiel-seven-nine he's carryin' 'round. 'E ought to have an eight spot in it, an' with a six an' a ten 'e'd 'ave a straight an' it 'ud take a flush er a full house to beat 'im. I bet 'e's a poker sharp, an' 'e's hidin'

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

from sump'n over 'ere, an' 'e ain't the fust one that's done it. I seen 'im stewed once't an' 'e had a lovely still. He'd oozed in the juice over to the county seat an' come over 'ere an' felt bad about it in my shanty. He come up to the window w'en I was fixin' my pipe an' yelled, 'Bow ye not down 'afore idols!' I went out an' hustled 'im in out o' the wet. It was rainin' pretty bad an' 'e was soaked, but 'e said 'e didn't care so long's none of it didn't git in 'is stummick. I dassent light a match near 'is breath.

"I had 'im 'ere two days, an' 'e said he'd took sump'n by mistake, an' 'e had. I had to keep givin' 'im more air all the time. He drunk enough water the next mornin' to put out a big fire an' I guess 'e had one in 'im all right. After that 'e ast me if I had any whiskey, an' w'en I told 'im I didn't, 'e said 'e was glad of it, fer it was devil's lure. He'd 'a' stowed it if he'd got to it. I did 'ave a little an' I guess now's a good time to git it out, an' I hope I don't find no texts stuck in the jug. We all need bracin' up, so 'ere goes! That feller's a blankety-blankety-blank-blank-blank, an' besides that 'e's got other faults!"

It seems a pity to have to expurgate Sipes's

## HOLY ZEKE

original and ornate profanity from his discourses, but common decency requires it. The old man left the shanty with a lantern and shovel. A few minutes later we saw his light at the edge of the lake where he was washing the sand from the outside of his jug. Evidently it had been buried treasure.

"I've et an' drunk so much sand since I been livin' 'ere on this beach that my throat's all wore out an' full o' little holes, an' I ain't goin' to swaller no more'n I c'n help after this," he remarked, as he came in and hung the lantern on its hook in the ceiling; "now you fellers drink hearty."

At this juncture a wailing sepulchral voice, loud and deep, came out of the darkness in the distance.

"Beware! Beware! Beware! In the earth have ye found damnation!"

"There 'e is!" yelled Sipes, as he leaped across the floor for his scatter-gun. He ran out with it and was gone for some time. He returned with an expression of disgust on his weather-beaten face. "I'll wing that cuss some night 'fore the snow falls," he remarked, as he resumed his seat.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

"We'd better soak up all this booze tonight fer it won't be safe in any o' the ground 'round 'ere any more. Gosh! but this is a fine country to live in!"

The party broke up quite late. Happy Cal had imbibed rather freely. Catfish John had been more temperate, and thought he had "better go 'long with Cal," and it seemed better that he should. As they went away I could hear Cal entertaining John with snatches of some old air about "wine, women, an' song." They stopped a while at the margin of the lake, where the wet sand made the walking better, and Cal affectionately assured John of his eternal devotion. They then disappeared.

I bade Sipes and his old shipmate good-night, and left them alone with the demon in the jug. There was very little chance of any of it ever falling into the hands of "the scourge," who was evidently lurking in the vicinity.

The glory of the full moon over the lake caused Sipes to remark that "ev'rythin's full tonight," as he followed me out to bid me another good-by. After I left I could hear noisy vocalism in the shanty. The words, which were sung over and over, were:

## HOLY ZEKE

*"Comrades, comrades, ever since we was boys, —  
Sharing each other's sorrows, sharing each other's  
joys."*

After each repetition there would be boisterous, rhythmic pounding of heavy boots on the wooden floor.

While the song was in many keys, and was technically open to much criticism, it was evidently sincere. The old shipmates were happy, and, after all, besides happiness, how much is there in the world really worth striving for?

I walked along the beach for a couple of miles to my temporary quarters in the dunes, and the stirring events of the evening furnished much food for reflection. I was interested in the advent of Bill Saunders, concerning whom I had heard so much from Sipes. Bill was a good deal of a mystery. He had "showed up" a few days before in response to a letter which Sipes told me he had "put in *pustoffice* fer 'im." He may at some time have lived on the "unknown island in the South Pacific" that Sipes told me about, where he and Bill had been wrecked, and Bill had "married into the royal family several times," but evidently he had deserted his black and tan

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

household. For at least two years he had been living over on the river. Sipes explained that he stayed there "so as to be unbeknown." For some reason which I did not learn, he and Sipes considered it advisable for him to "keep dark" for a while. The trouble, whatever it was, had evidently blown over, and Bill had returned to the sand-hills.

There was a rudely painted sign on the shanty a few days later, which read:

~~\$~~ipes & ~~\$~~SAUNDERS ~~\$~~Fresh ~~F~~ish

"It might 'a' been Saunders & Sipes," said the old man to me, confidentially, "but I think Sipes & Saunders sounds more dignified like, don't you? We got 'fresh fish' on the sign so's people won't git 'em mixed up with the kind o' fish John peddles. Them fish are fresh w'en John gits 'em 'ere, but after 'e's 'ad 'em 'round a while there's invisible bein's gits into 'em out o' the air, an' you c'n smell 'em a mile. W'en they git to be candydates fer 'is smoke-house their ol' friends wouldn't know 'em, an' I put them up an' down lines in them S's in them names so's to make the sign look like cash money."

## HOLY ZEKE

Several days later I discovered that my tent had been visited during my absence. Outside, pinned to the flap, was a piece of paper on which was written:

“All ye who smoke or chew the filthy weed shall be damned.”

*“The breath of hell, an angry breath,  
Supplies and fans the fire,  
When smokers taste the second death  
And shriek and howl, but can't expire.”*

Inside, on the cot, were several tracts containing extracts from sermons on hell by an old ranter of early New England days, setting forth the practical impossibility of anybody ever escaping it.

I examined the literature with interest and amusement. Some of the more virulent paragraphs were marked for my benefit.

I looked out over the landscape, with its glorious autumn coloring, to the expanse of turquoise waters beyond, and wondered if, above the fleecy clouds and the infinite blue of the heavens, there was an Omnipotent monstrosity Who gloried in the torture of what He created, and brought forth life that He might wreak vengeance upon it. Ignorance, fear, and superstition have led men into



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

strange paths. It may be that our philosophy will finally lead us back to the beginning, and teach us that we are humble, wondering children who do not understand, and that there is a border land beyond which we may not go.

I met the firm of Sipes & Saunders on the beach one morning, on their way to Catfish John's place, which was about four miles from their shanty. John's abode was on a low bluff, and on the beach near it, about a hundred feet from the lake, was the little structure in which he smoked what Sipes called "them much-deceased fish" which he had failed to sell. His peddling trips were made through the back country with a queer little wagon and a rheumatic horse, that bore the name of "Napoleon" with his other troubles. Some of the fish were from his own nets, but most of his supplies were obtained from Sipes on a consignment basis.

At the earnest solicitation of the old mariners, I turned back and went with them to call on John. Sipes said that I "had better come along fer there's goin' to be sump'n doin'."

We found the old man out on the sand repairing his gill-nets.

## HOLY ZEKE

"Wot 'ave I done that I should be descended on like this?" he asked jocularly, as we came up. "You fellers must be lookin' fer trouble, fer Zeke's comin' 'ere this mornin' fer a fish that I told 'im 'e could 'ave if I got any."

"I figgered it all out," said Sipes, "cause Bill heard you tell 'im you was goin' to lift the nets Sunday, an' I seen you out'n the lake with the spotter, an' as Bill an' me's got some business with Zeke, we thought we'd drop 'round."

Sipes's "spotter" was an old spy glass, which he declared "had been on salt water." Through a small hole in the side of his shanty he could sweep the curving shore for several miles with the rickety instrument.

I walked over to the smoke-house with the party and inspected it with much interest. The smoke supply came from a dilapidated old stove on the sand from which a rusty pipe entered the side of the structure. The smoke escaped slowly through various cracks in the roof, which provided a light draft for the fire.

"That smoke gits a lot of experience in this place 'fore it goes out through them cracks," remarked Sipes, as he opened the door and peered

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

inside. "I don't blame it fer leavin'. Can ye lock this door tight, John?"

I curiously awaited further developments.

It was not long before we saw Zeke plodding toward us on the sand.

"Now don't you fellers say nothin'. You jest set 'round careless like, an' let me do the talkin'," cautioned Sipes, as he filled his pipe. With an expressive closing of his single eye, he turned to me confidentially and said with a chuckle, "We're goin' to fumigate Zeke."

There was a look of quiet determination in his face, and guile in his smile as he contemplated the approaching visitor.

"Hello, Zeke!" he called out, as soon as that frowsy individual was within hailing distance, "wot's the news from hell this fine mornin'?"

We smiled at Sipes's sally. Zeke looked at us solemnly, and in deep impressive tones replied: "Verily, them that laughs at sin, laughs w'en their Maker frowns, laughs with the sword o' vengeance over their heads."

"Oh, come on, Zeke, cut that out," said Sipes, "an' let's go in an' see the big sturgeon wot John got this mornin'. It's 'ere in the smoke-house."

## HOLY ZEKE

Sipes led the way to the door and opened it. Zeke peeked in cautiously.

"It's over in that big box with them other fish near the wall," said Sipes. Zeke stepped inside. Sipes instantly closed the door and sprung the padlock that secured it. He then ran around to the stove and lighted the fuel with which it was stuffed.

An angry roar came from the interior, as we departed. After we reached the damp sand on the shore, Sipes joyfully exclaimed, "Verily we'll now 'ave to git a new scourge, fer this one's up ag'inst damnation!"

While John had passively acquiesced in the proceedings, I knew that he did not intend to allow Sipes's escapade to go too far, so I did not worry about Zeke.

As we walked down the shore, Sipes and Bill turned frequently to look at the softly ascending wreaths from the roof with much glee.

"That coop's never 'ad nothin' wuss in it than it's got now," declared Sipes. "That ol' bunch o' whiskers 'as got wot's comin' to 'im this time, an' I wish I'd stuck John's rubber boots in that stove, but, honest, I fergot it."



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

We had gone quite a distance when I turned and discerned a retreating form far beyond the smoke-house close to the bluff. One side of the structure was wrecked, and it was evident that the "scourge" had broken through and escaped. I said nothing, as I did not want to mar the pleasure of the old shipmates. To them it was "the end of a perfect day."

A little further on I left them and turned into the dunes. As they waved farewell, Sipes called out cheerily, "You c'n travel anywheres 'round 'ere now without git'n' burnt!"

Later, from far away over the sands, I could faintly hear:

*"Shipmates, shipmates, ever since we was boys—  
Sharing each other's sorrows, sharing each other's  
joys!"*

One night I encased myself in storm-defying raiment and went down to the shore to contemplate a drama that was being enacted in the skies.

Swiftly moving battalions of stygian clouds were illuminated by almost continuous flashes of lightning. Heavy peals of thunder rolled through the convoluted masses, and reverber-

## HOLY ZEKE

ated along the horizon. The wind-driven rain came in thin sheets that mingled with the flying spray from the waves that swept the beach. The sublimity of the storm was soul stirring and inspiring. I plodded for half a mile or so along the surf-washed sand to the foot of a bluff on which were a few old pines, to see the effect of the gnarled branches against the lightning-charged clouds.

A brilliant flash revealed a silhouetted figure with gesticulating arms. It was Holy Zeke. His battered plug was jammed down over the back of his head, and his long coat tails were flapping in the gale. The apparition was grotesque and startling, but seemed naturally to take its place in the wild pageant of the elements. It added a note of human interest that seemed strangely harmonious.

I did not wish to intrude on him, or allow him to interfere with my enjoyment of the storm, but passed near enough to hear his resonant voice above the roar of the wind.

He was in his element. He had sought a height from which he could behold the scourging of the earth, and pour forth imprecations on imaginary

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

multitudes of heretics and unbelievers. With fanatic fervor he was calling down curses upon a world of hopeless sin. Hatred of human kind was exhaled from his poisoned soul amid the fury of the storm.

To his disordered imagination, any unusual manifestation of nature's forces was an expression of Divine wrath. Condemnation was now coming out of the black vault above him, and the vengeance of an incensed Diety was being heralded from on high. Unregenerate sinners and rejectors of Zeke's creed were in the hands of an angry God. The scroll of earth's infamy was being unrolled out of the clouds. "The seventh vial" was being poured out, and the hour of final damnation was at hand.

In the armor of his infallible orthodoxy, like Ajax, he stood unafraid before the lurid shafts. Serene in his exclusive holiness he was immune from the fiery pit and the shambles of the damned, and gloried in the coming destruction of all those unblest with his faultless dogma.

The storm was increasing in violence, and I had started to return. After going some distance I turned for a final view of Zeke, and it was unexpectedly dramatic.

## HOLY ZEKE

There was a sudden dazzling glare, and a deafening crash. A tall tree, not far from where he stood, was shattered into fragments. The shock was terrific. He was gone when a succeeding flash lighted the scene. Fearing that the old man might have met fatality, or at least have been badly injured, I hurried back and climbed the steep path that led to the top of the promontory from the ravine beyond it. Careful search, with the aid of an electric pocket light and the lightning flashes, failed to reveal any traces of the old fanatic, and it was safe to assume that he had retreated in good order from surroundings that he had reluctantly decided were untenable.

The bolt that struck the tree was charged with an obvious moral that was probably lost on the fugitive.

The old shipmates were much interested when they heard the tale of the night's adventure.

"That ol' cuss'll git his, sometime, good an' plenty," observed Sipes. "Sump'n took a pot shot at Zeke an' made a bad score. It would 'a' helped some if the lightnin' 'ad only got that ol' hat o' his. Prob'ly it's been hit before. Zeke 'ad better look out. He's been talkin' too much 'bout



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

them things. It's too bad fer a nice tree like that to git all busted up. No feller with a two-gallon hat an' red whiskers ever oughta buzz 'round in a thunder storm."

John was quite philosophical about Zeke.

"He ought to learn to stay in w'en it's wet. His kind o' relig'n don't mix with water, an' some night 'e'll go out in a storm like that an' 'e won't come back. He was 'round 'ere this mornin' tell'n me 'bout the signs o' the times an' heav'nly fires.

"Them ol' fellers hadn't ought to fuss so much 'bout 'im. They come up 'ere the day after they smoked 'im, an' fixed my smoke-house all up fer me. They said thar was too many cracks 'round in it, an' the boards 'round the sides was all too thin. They got some heavy boards an' big nails an' they done a good job. They said they'd fixed it so it 'ud hold a grizzly b'ar if I wanted to keep one, an' I was glad they come up.

"When Zeke broke through 'e didn't fergit 'is fish. He took the biggest one thar was in the box. When 'e went off 'e was yell'n sump'n 'bout them that stoned an' mocked the prophets, an' sump'n 'bout a feller named Elijah, that was

## HOLY ZEKE

goin' up in a big wind in a chair o' fire, but I didn't hear all of it, fer 'e was excited. Zeke's a poor ol' feller. It's all right fer 'em to cuss 'im, fer 'e gives it to 'em pretty hard w'en 'e gits down thar, but that don't do no harm. They ain't no nearer hell than they'd be without Zeke tell'n 'em 'bout it all the time. He's part o' the people what's 'round us, an' we ought to git 'long with 'im. I'll alw'ys give 'im a fish when 'e's hungry, even if 'e does think I'm goin' to hell."



VII

THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL  
AND ELVIREY SMETTERS







Mrs. Elvira Smetters



## VII

### THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL AND ELVIREY SMETTERS

**H**APPY CAL" had been a member of the widely scattered colony of derelicts along the wild coast for many years; in fact, he was its beginning, for when he came through the sand-hills and gathered the driftwood to build his humble dwelling, there were no human neighbors.

The circling gulls, the crows, and the big blue herons that stalked along the wave-washed beach looked curiously at the intruder into their solitudes. The blue-jays scolded boisterously, and many pairs of concealed eyes peered at him slyly from tangled masses of tree roots that lay denuded upon the slopes of the wind-swept dunes.

Nature's slow and orderly processes of generation and decay were now to be disturbed by a new element, for man, who changes, destroys, and makes ugly the fair world he looks upon, had entered these sanctuaries. The furred and feathered



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

things instinctively resented the advent of the despoiler. They heard strange noises as rusty nails were pounded, and odd pieces of gray, smooth wood were fashioned into the queer-looking structure that obtruded itself among the undulations of the sand.

Happy Cal was human wreckage. He had been thrown upon this desolate shore by the cruel forces of a social system which he was unable to combat. They had cast him aside and he had sought isolation. As he expressed it, "there was too much goin' on."

Cal's stories of his early life, and his final escape from a heartless world, incited derisive comment from his friend Sipes.

On still, cool days the smoke ascended softly from Cal's shanty, and my sketching was often neglected for an hour or two with its interesting occupant.

He sometimes prowled around through the country back of the dunes at night, and the necessities for his rude housekeeping were collected gradually. His age was difficult to guess; perhaps he looked older than he was. His lustreless eyes, weather-beaten face, grizzled unkempt beard, and

## THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL

rough hands, carried the story of a struggle on the raw edges of life.

While he said that he had "been up ag'inst it," he seemed now comparatively contented. His interests were few, but they filled his days, and, as he expressed it, he "didn't need nothin' to think about nights." Sipes claimed, however, that "Cal done all 's thinkin' at night, if 'e done any, fer 'e don't never do none in the daytime."

Sipes and Cal met occasionally. With the exception of a few serious misunderstandings, which were always eventually patched up, they got along very well with each other. Sipes's attitude, while generally friendly, was not very charitable. He was disposed to comment caustically upon the many flaws he found in Cal, who, he believed, was destined for a hot hereafter. It is only fair to Cal to say that Sipes did not know of anybody in the dune country who would not have a hot hereafter, except his friend "Catfish John," and his old shipmate, Bill Saunders, who lived with him, and with whom, in early life, he had sailed many stormy seas. He transacted his fish business with John, and was very fond of him. He once remarked that, "Old John don't never wash,

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

an' 'e smells pretty fishy, but you bet 'e treats me all right, an' wot's the difference? I c'n always stay to wind'ard if I want to."

Mrs. Elvirey Smetters lived over in the back country, on the road that led from the sleepy village to the marshy strip, and through it over into the dunes, where it was finally lost in the sand. It was a township line road and was seldom used for traffic. Travellers on it usually walked. The house, which had once been painted white, with green blinds, was rather shabby. Two tall evergreens stood in the front yard. In the carefully kept flower-beds along the fence the geraniums, cockscombs, marigolds, and verbenas bloomed gorgeously. They were constantly refreshed from the wooden pump near the back door. A smooth path led from the front gate, flanked with a luxurious growth of myrtle.

I pulled the brown bell handle one morning with a view of buying one of the young ducks which were waddling and quacking about the yard. I was going over to visit my old friend Sipes and intended it as a present for his Sunday dinner.

Mrs. Smetters, whom I had often met, opened

## THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL

the door. She wiped her face with her apron, and was profuse with her apologies for the appearance of everything. She explained at length the various causes that had brought about the disorderly conditions, which I must know would be different if so and so, and so and so, and so and so.

She was tall, muscular, of many angles, red-headed, and freckled. The pupils of the piercing eyes behind the brass-rimmed spectacles had a reddish tinge, and her square, protruding chin suggested anything but domestic docility. It was such a chin that took Napoleon over the Alps, and Cæsar into Gaul.

She had buried three husbands. They were resting, as Sipes said, "fer the fust time in their lives," in the church-yard beyond the village, where flowers from the little garden were often laid upon the mounds.

A village gossip had said that Mrs. Smetters would sometimes return to the mounds, after she had left them, and transfer a bunch of geraniums from one to another, and once, she had cleaned off two of them and piled all of the offerings over the one near the tree. Sometimes the others



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

would have all of the geraniums. The gossips could see these things, but they could not look into the secret chambers of Elvirey Smetters's heart.

On the walls of such chambers are recorded something that is never told. Thoughtful deeds, tender looks of sympathy and understanding, and years devoted, leave their traces there. With a thread of gossamer, memory leads us gently to them, and out into the world again, where we carry flowers to silent places. The strongest sometimes become the weakest, but who knows if such weakness is not the strength of the mighty?

Time had softened the sorrows of Elvirey Smetters. Little wrinkles were beginning to tell the story of her passing years, for she was nearly sixty, and a sense of life's futility was creeping over her. She felt the need of new environment and new sensations.

"Now before you begin talkin' about any duck you want to buy," said Mrs. Smetters, after the object of the visit was explained, "I want to know if you've seen anythin' o' Cal. I ain't seen 'im fer a month, an' if you run across 'im, I want you to tell 'im I'm sick, an' 'e better come an' see how

## THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL

I am. I'll make you a present o' that duck if you'll just walk in on 'im an' tell 'im sump'n that don't look like it come from me, that'll make 'im come over 'ere. You needn't let on that I want to see 'im, but you fix it somehow so's 'e'll *come*."

I solemnly promised to do this, but insisted upon settling for the duck, which was soon dressed and wrapped in an old copy of *The Weekly Clarion*, which was published at the county seat.

"Now you be careful an' not let 'im know I said a word about 'im," was her parting injunction at the gate, "but *you git 'im 'ere*, an' don't say nothin' to Sipes either!"

She was assured that great care would be exercised.

During the walk through the dunes I mused upon the wiles of Mrs. Smetters's sex, and reflected upon the futility of any attempt to escape them, when they are practiced by an adept upon an average man. It is a world-old story — as old as the Garden of Eden. The lure of the feminine rules the earth, and it is a part of the scheme of things that it should be so. The female of all breathing creatures controls the wooing — from

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

the lady-bug to Elvirey Smetters. However masculine vanity may seek to disguise it, the wooer is as clay in the hands of the potter. The meditations of some of the world's greatest men have been devoted to the complexities of female human nature, and during these meditations they have often married.

Along toward noon the duck was turned over to Sipes in front of his shanty. He was greatly pleased. It varied the monotony of small gifts of tobacco and cigars which usually reciprocated his many hospitalities.

"Elvirey's got a lot o' them birds," he remarked, "an' I was goin' over some night to persuade one of 'em to come to my shanty. If she wasn't a woman, they'd all been gone long ago. I hear 'em spatterin' in the ditch ev'ry time I go by, an' I often think, s'posen them lily-white ducks b'longed to some o' them fellers that set 'round the village store, wot would I do?"

I inquired if he had seen anything of Cal lately.

"Cal's snoopin' 'round 'is coop right now. You c'n see 'im with the spotter," said the old man, as he brought out his rickety old brass spy-

## THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL

glass. Through it I could just make out a figure moving about on the sand near the distant shanty.

I left the old mariner, intending to come out of the dunes near Cal's place sometime during the afternoon, being really anxious to accommodate Mrs. Smetters.

In the course of time I reached Cal's shanty and found him sharpening a knife near the door. We shook hands and, after discussing various matters of mutual interest, I mentioned the call on Mrs. Smetters for the purpose of buying a duck for Sipes.

"W'y didn't you git me a duck too if you was git'n one fer him?" he asked rather peevishly. He was placated with a cigar and the explanation that I had not expected to see him on this trip. He betrayed no curiosity at the mention of Mrs. Smetters. I tried again, and told him that I had had a long talk with her and she did not look as though she was very well; she appeared sad, and seemed ill. At this he began to show interest.

"Wot d'ye s'pose is the matter with 'er? W'y don't she eat some catnip if she's sick?"

I replied that probably she found it rather lonely since her last husband died.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

"Say, d'ye know wot I think I'll do? I'll go over there tomorrer an' take 'er some fresh fish, an' mebbe she'll gimme a duck. I ain't seen 'er fer a long time."

Having approved of his suggestion, and realizing that the mission had been accomplished, I departed after we had talked of other things for a while. Visits to Cal were always enjoyable, although his reminiscences were to be accepted with a grain of salt. His logic, morals, and language were bad, but his narratives had the charm of originality, and he never failed to be entertaining. Naturally, I was curious as to the outcome of the projected call on Mrs. Smetters, but not being concerned in further developments, I dismissed it from my mind. Interest was quickly revived on meeting Sipes a month later.

"Say, wot d'ye think's happened?" exclaimed the old man. "Elvirey's snared Cal good an' plenty. That ol' cuss has been up to see 'er a dozen times in the last two weeks. Bill an' me's been watchin' 'em with the spotter from up yonder in them trees on top o' that big dune where we c'n see 'er house. Say, you'd laugh yerself sick. Gener'ly 'e sneaks 'round an' goes along the edge

## THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL

o' the marsh over back o' here, so's 'e won't 'ave to go by our place. Last night 'e come by with a collar on. His whiskers was combed an' so was 'is hair. He was all lit up an' reminded Bill an' me o' that hiker we found walkin' on the beach once't that we piloted off a couple o' miles to show 'im where we told 'im 'e could cetch some mock-turtles. Bill's up there with the spotter watchin' now. We call that place the masthead."

Far away I could see the glint of the spy-glass, and could dimly make out the figure of the lone sentinel in his eyry upon the height. He was ensconced in a mass of gnarled and tangled roots which the wind-blown sand had left bare on the distant hilltop.

"We got a little place among them roots," said the old man, "that jest fits the spotter w'en it's trained on Elvirey's place, an' all ye have to do is jest set down an' look. Bill takes the fust watch w'en we can't see nothin' 'round Cal's shanty, an' I go aloft in the afternoon. We seen 'im twice yisterd'y. Him an' Elvirey was out in the yard waterin' the flowers. I s'pose she wants to keep 'em growin' nice so's she c'n lay 'em over Cal like she does the others.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

"If there's sump'n doin' at Elvirey's, Bill'll hang a rag on that big dead limb ye see stickin' out, an' it's there now!" The fluttering signal of "sump'n doin'" was faintly visible.

"That rag's jest to show he's seen Cal over there, an' if 'e thinks I oughta come up, 'e'll put out another in a minute. That 'ud mean that they was set'n out in the yard, er goin' off som'er's together, mebbe to the village." We kept our eyes on the summit for some time, but the second signal did not appear.

A week later I found Cal at the home of the old shipmates. He looked rather crestfallen. An air of embarrassment and restraint seemed to pervade the place. I feared that I had intruded, and was going away, when Sipes insisted that I remain and go out on the lake with him. He thought that a recent storm might have damaged his gill-nets and wanted to look them over. After Cal's departure we shoved the row-boat into the water. On the way out to the nets the old man told me the thrilling tale of the love of Happy Cal and Elvirey Smetters.

"This Elvirey's a queer ol' girl," he began. "Them husbands she's been git'n a c'lection of

## THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL

over in the cemetery was a bum lot. Before she begun git'n married 'er name was Prokop. Fust she married a feller named Swisher, an' she was livin' with 'im w'en I fust come in the hills. He was no good, an' I never liked 'is name. It sounded kind o' fishy an' whistley to me. After a while Swisher commenced git'n thin an' all yellow, an' one day 'e skipped. She lit out after 'im an' brought 'im back from over to the county seat. He died about a month later of sump'n the doctor said 'ad busted up 'is liver. He left 'er that little place, where she lives.

"The next feller's name was Smythe, an' 'e was a funny lookin' gink. He was runnin' a little circus wot went 'round the country in the summer. He used to wear high brown boots with 'is trowsies stuck in 'em, an' a velvet vest, with a watch chain that weighed about a pound. He had a wide gray hat, an' a red neck-tie with a hunk o' glass on it, an' a long moustache that looked like a feather duster. He looked fierce, but Elvirey fell fer 'im w'en she seen 'im out in front of 'is tent on a box doin' a lot o' funny tricks with cards fer the crowd. The circus busted up an' 'e moved over to Elvirey's place. The circus



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

posters said 'is name was Blondini, but 'is real name was Smith. He wrote it Smythe, so's to make folks think 'e had money an' was a society bug. He died o' sump'n, I don't know wot it was, an' then poor ol' Smetters come along. He was a fat feller. He painted the house, an' fussed 'round on the place fer a year, an' then 'ad fits. His conniptions would come on most any time, an' Elvirey let ol' Doc Looney in on to 'im one night, an' the next mornin' 'e was dead. The Doc 'ad given 'im some horse medicine, an' it finished 'im.

"Them three are all layin' side by side, wait'n fer Cal, fer 'e told us this mornin' that 'im an' Elvirey's goin' to git married.

"Bill an' me seen 'em from the masthead yisterd'y, walkin' down the road. They set down on the grass, an' we sneaked over an' got behind some bushes, an' we heard 'im callin' 'er 'kitten' an' she was callin' 'im a duck. Bill says, 'Look at them columbines!' an' we busted out laughin'. Then they both roasted us fer listenin'. Cal was dead sore, but 'e didn't say very much. Elvirey pretty near killed Bill with a big stick, an' knocked 'im into the bushes. He got up an' lit out, an' so

## THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL

did I, fer after Bill was down she started fer me. I didn't need no clubbin' an' scooted. She chased me a ways, but I got home all right. I wonder w'y them that gits love-sick always calls each other animals an' birds?"

During Sipes's narrative I felt a pang of regret that I had not spent the day at "the masthead," for evidently it would have been worth while.

"Cal come over today an' we had a long talk," continued the old man. "He said 'e hoped they wasn't no hard feelin's, 'cause 'e hadn't started nothin' an' it was us fellers' fault that Elvirey got to goin'. Bill 'ad a bump on 'is head as big as an aig, but we all shook hands an' agreed to call it off. An' now comes this damn wedd'n they're goin' to have. Cal says they're goin' to be married by Holy Zeke, an' wot d'ye think? they want to have the wedd'n in our shanty, 'cause Elvirey says she won't let Bill an' me come to her house, an' Cal won't be married 'less 'e c'n 'ave 'is friends with 'im. His shanty ain't big enough fer the bunch, an' ours is halfway between, so they've fixed on that, an' we're in fer it.

"I don't know wot Cal's goin' to do about 'is

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

last name that 'e's got to be married with. He says 'e's been livin' alone so long 'e's fergot wot it is, an' we got to pick out a new one fer 'im. I told 'im 'e better call it Mud, but 'e didn't cetch on to no joke. Wouldn't that make a fine soundin' lot o' names fer Elvirey's lot in the church-yard? Swisher, Smythe, Smetters, an' Mud! Ev'rybody'd stop to look at 'em.

"Cal's gone to tell John, an' Saturd'y night him an' Holy Zeke'll come down, an' Cal's kitten's going to fetch a cake. Cal said you was invited, an' if you got any business to close up 'fore you come, you'd better 'tend to it, fer mebbe hell'll be to pay 'fore it's over. I'll bet Elvirey won't stand fer me an' Bill w'en she sees wot we're goin' to do to the shanty fer the wedd'n."

After inspecting the nets we returned, and I promised to be on hand Saturday evening. Sipes requested me to come early, "so as to think o' sump'n us fellers might fergit."

I looked forward to Saturday with eager anticipation, and arrived at the shanty just before dusk. Evidently the old shipmates had been very busy. They were in high spirits.

A couple of old fish-nets were stretched from

## THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL

each side of the door, in parallel lines, to a point about fifty feet away on the sand. Boards, obtained from among the driftwood on the beach, had been laid along between them. "Bill's a big help about them things," said the old man. "He says it's 'is habit w'en 'e gits married to have sump'n like that stretched out fer the bride to walk between so's nobody'll try to steal 'er at the last minute."

The roof of the shanty was thickly covered with dead leaves, held in place by more nets which were laid over them and weighted with stones. "We could 'a' got green ones," said Sipes, "but them old leaves looks more fit like. They wasn't neither of 'em born yisterd'y.

The rusty stove-pipe, which served as a chimney, had been carefully wrapped in white cloth, at least it had once been white, and a long strip of bright red material had been tied to it, which fluttered in the breeze. Sipes said that this was the danger signal. A large bunch of bulrushes and cat-tails was stuffed into the top of the stove-pipe.

The sign on the shanty —

~~S~~IPES & ~~S~~AUNDER\$-FRESH FISH



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

had been covered with a strip of rotten canvas, on which was painted,

### *MANY HAPPY RETURNS*

The conspirators had gathered a lot of thistle blossoms, with plenty of the leaves, with which they had festooned the interior. An old beer-keg, mounted on a box, which stood at one end of the single room, was to serve as the altar. On it were two lemons, with which time had not dealt very gently. Their significance was not explained.

All over the shanty, where the decorations did not interfere, were groups of four vertical chalk-lines. "Them marks is Elvirey's score," explained the old man.

A nail keg, with one end knocked out, hung endwise above the altar, and in the opening a large ripe tomato was suspended from the inside by a string. On the keg was painted a large figure 4. "That there's the marriage bell," said Sipes.

A lantern on a hook in the ceiling, and a dozen candle stubs were to furnish illumination. The music was also provided for. There was a covered

## THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL

box near the wall, with gimlet holes all over it, that evidently contained something alive.

"That's full o' hummin' locusts that me an' Bill caught," said Sipes, "an' when Zeke says it's all over, I'll hammer on the box an' them little singers'll git busy. We tried 'em this mornin' an' it works fine."

The stove was stuffed with stray pieces of old leather and rubber boots, mixed with oiled rags. "W'en we light that fire, with the chimblly stopped up with them cat-tails, it'll show that the party's over," chuckled the old man.

The arrangements seemed quite complete, and I had no suggestions to offer. The wedding party was to assemble around a drift-wood fire on the sand, some distance away, and proceed to the shanty at eight o'clock. A huge pile of material for the bonfire had been gathered.

The flames soon crackled merrily and lit up the beach. The red light touched the crests of the little waves that lapped the shore, and bathed the side of the sandy bluff with a mellow glow. It illuminated the shanty which, with its grotesque decorations, relieved against the dark green of the ravine beyond, resembled a stage setting for a comic opera.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

The wedding guests soon began to arrive. "Catfish John," with a large package under his arm, accompanied by Holy Zeke, were the first comers, after the fire was lighted. They had walked a long distance, and sat down wearily on the sand, after the conventional greetings. John's package probably contained some smoked fish which he intended as a present for the bride. Sipes sniffed at it with evident approval.

In a few minutes Mrs. Smetters arrived with her friend Mrs. McCafferty, who carried the cake in a basket. Mrs. McCafferty lived in the sleepy village, several miles away. She was to act as bridesmaid, and was to "give the bride away," which Sipes declared she would "do anyhow afterwards if she didn't do it now." She was a buxom Irish widow, with a fighting record, and a mind of her own. She had brought Mrs. Smetters to the wedding with her buggy and gray horse, which had been left where the sloping road ended in the beach sand. It was her custom to attend all of Elvirey's weddings in the same capacity. She was her bosom friend and confidante.

Mrs. Smetters was attired in a new white muslin dress, with a bountiful corsage bouquet of

## THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL

white peonies. She was bareheaded, and lilies of the valley accented the bricky red of her hair. As at all weddings, "the bride was very beautiful."

We rose and greeted the ladies cordially. Mrs. Smetters looked inquiringly around for Cal, but he had not yet arrived. She then seated herself on the shawl which Mrs. McCafferty carefully spread out on the sand. No reference was made to the stormy scene of the interrupted wooing of a few days before. Bill was still nursing his sore head, but made no unpleasant allusions.

The hour had arrived, but the party was still incomplete. Happy Cal was conspicuously absent.

"Mebbe he's doin' a lot o' fixin' up an' can't find 'is perfumery, er mebbe he's fergot about the wedd'n," observed Sipes.

An angry glance from Mrs. Smetters was the only response to this sally.

The ladies looked curiously at the shanty, and Sipes had much difficulty in keeping them away from it. He announced that "they wasn't goin' to be no rubberin' 'round the place 'till the wedd'n." They started several times, but were persuaded to wait until Cal came.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

An hour slipped by, and the delinquent did not appear.

"Lo, the bridegroom cometh not," said Holy Zeke, solemnly.

Clouds of feminine wrath were gathering on the other side of the fire.

"We're goin' over to see them fixin's," announced Mrs. Smetters, with determination. "This is wot I git fer wearin' my heart on my sleeve!"

I walked along the beach in the hope that I might meet Cal. Sipes went to the shanty and lit the lantern and the candles. The two females led the rest of the party along between the nets. After they entered it took them but a few seconds to fully comprehend the *tout ensemble*, and then came the event of the evening.

Mrs. McCafferty started to swoon, but suddenly revived when Mrs. Smetters hurled a stove-lid at Sipes, followed by the keg from the altar. The male members of the party beat a rapid retreat through the door into the welcome shadows. Sipes ran in my direction. We stood about a hundred yards away in the darkness, and surveyed the scene.

With the fury of a woman scorned, Elvirey

## THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL

was smashing up the place. With the able help of her bosom friend, every movable breakable thing was being destroyed and thrown out. The window was demolished early in the proceedings, and through the broken sash went wrecked cooking utensils, blankets, guns, cards, bottles, boxes, pieces of the table, and other things, too numerous to mention. Amid loud blows of an axe, the side of the shanty began to give way.

Suddenly we heard piercing shrieks, and the two maddened women fled wildly from the shanty in the direction of the buggy.

"I'll bet they've busted open them insects!" exclaimed Sipes.

We waited a while, and looked for the other members of the party. We called repeatedly, but no answer came out of the gloom. They had been swallowed in the blackness of the night.

We then went to inspect the wreck. All of the old shipmates' efforts to make the wedding a success had been "love's labor lost." The decorations were mingled with fragments of the stove and the splintered bunks. There seemed to be nothing in the place that was breakable that had not been attended to. The "hummin' locusts"

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

were innocently crawling about the floor and walls.

"We might as well c'lect this music an' put it out," said Sipes, ruefully, as he began picking up the locusts. "We wouldn't 'a' had no shanty left if it hadn't been fer them. I guess I must 'a' started sump'n. After this I'm goin to let ev'ry feller run 'is own business, an' me an' Bill'll flock by ourselves. Look wot I git fer tryin' to please ev'rybody all the time! Somebody's always butt'n in an' spoilin' ev'rythin' I try to do. I got hit with too damn many things out o' the air tonight to be happy. Wot d'ye 'spose become o' Cal? He'd 'a' got a lemon if 'e'd 'a' married that ol' swivel-eyed sliver-cat. I'm goin' up in the ravine to sleep, an' mebbe Bill'll show up in the mornin'. Say, wot do *you* think o' matrimony, anyway? Gosh! but this is rough work. Bill an' me was in a hurricane once't out'n the Pacific—the ship's rudder got busted off an' we was spun along on the equator fer a thousand miles, but that wasn't nothin' 'side o' this."

The old man stood disconsolate among his ruins. There was gloom on his face as I bade him good-night, and there was a pressure in his

## THE LOVE AFFAIR OF HAPPY CAL

hand grasp, as of one who did not want to be left alone. From a distance down the shore I could see the flickering light of the expiring bonfire, playing upon the scene of the recent drama, as fate toys with the destinies of human lives.

Cal's failure to appear at his wedding was never accounted for. The following week we found his shanty deserted. Its simple furnishings and Cal's boat were gone.

"That ol' skeesicks 'as got more sense than I ever thought, an' 'e's skipped. He'll be number four in that cemetery lot all right if 'e ever shows up," declared Sipes as we parted. "She rough-housed me when I didn't do nothin', an' I wouldn't like to see Cal's finish if she ever gits to 'im. The feller that ought to marry Hellfirey Smetters is Holy Zeke."

Perhaps from somewhere out in the darkness, Cal may have studied the group around the fire on the sand. Its light may have reflected the quiet gleam of tigerish ferocity that creeps into the eyes of a woman who is made to wait. He may have been appalled by the prospect of the loss of his much-loved freedom, and recoiled from further contact with a social system which had



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

discarded him, or he may have seen his "kitten" in a new light that dissipated illusion.

Anyway, as Sipes declared, "Elvirey's duck" had "lit out."

During a visit to Mrs. Smetters late in the fall, she gloomily remarked, "Now if *you* will tell *me* wot's the *use o' livin'*, I'd be *very grateful!*"

VIII

THE RESURRECTION OF BILL  
SAUNDERS









VIII  
THE RESURRECTION OF BILL  
SAUNDERS

SIPES and Saunders had acquired a detachable motor for their boat. Catfish John had obtained it on one of his various trips to the little village at the mouth of the river about fifteen miles away. The disgusted owner had traded it in on his fish account with John, and had thrown in, as a bonus, some gasoline, mixing oil, a lot of damaged small tools, a much-worn book of instructions, and a great deal of conversation. He was careful to impress on John that he wanted no "come back," and was not responsible in any way for what the contraption might or might not do after it left him. He had just had it "overhauled" by the makers for the third time, and he never wanted to see it again.

John, knowing the great persistence and ingenuity of his friends, and feeling that he was in the way of doing them a favor, put the despised machine in his wagon and departed.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

The following morning he drove up the beach to the fish shanty for his supplies.

"Wot's all this iron fickits?" asked Sipes, as he peered curiously into the wagon.

"That's a gas motor wot ye stick on the back o' yer boat. You fill up the tin thing with gasoline an' some kind of oil, an' then whirl that wheel wot's got the little wooden handle on it, an' 'way she goes an' runs yer boat, an' ye don't 'ave to row, an' ye c'n go anywheres whar it's wet. I traded wot a feller owed me fer 'bout fifty pounds o' fish fer it, an' if you fellers want it, ye c'n 'ave it if ye gimme the fish."

"Bill, come 'ere!" yelled Sipes.

The tousled gray head of Bill Saunders appeared in the doorway of the shanty.

"Wot's doin'?" he asked sleepily.

"Never you mind; you put on yer trowsies an' come on out 'ere an' see wot our ol' friend an' feller-citizen 'as fetched in."

Without following Sipes's instructions implicitly, the disturbed occupant of the shanty came out to the wagon.

"This 'ere little book wot the feller gave me," continued John, "has got it all in, with pitchers

## RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

of all the little things in the machine, an' how to grease it, an' run it, an' ev'rythin' about it. Thar's a lot o' figgers in it wot tells wot ye pay fer all the things that gits busted."

On the cover of the worn book, which the old man produced, was a highly colored picture of a slender youth, gay and debonair, with one of the machines in a canvas carrying bag. He swung it lightly and merrily in his hand as he tripped along toward his boat, which floated in the distance, where soft ripples laved its polished sides with pink water. His derby hat was tilted to a careless angle. On his face was a smile of joyful anticipation. There was no more suggestion of exertion than if the bag contained toy balloons instead of a motor. Nevertheless it required the united efforts of the three weather-buffed old fishermen to get the machine out of the wagon on to the beach. Such is the contrast between exuberant youth and seasoned maturity.

"I bet that feller with the hard-boiled hat ain't got the machine in that bag at all," remarked Saunders, as he studied the scene on the cover. "They's prob'ly some fellers follerin' 'im with it that don't show in the pitcher. I don't like that cig-



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

arette moustache on 'im; I'll bet 'e knows durned little 'bout navigation 'ceptin' with crackers on soup. You leave this thing 'ere an' me an' Sipes'll try 'er out, an' if it works, we'll keep 'er. Anyhow we'll make up the fish yer out an' you won't lose nothin'."

The fish for John's peddling trip were carefully sorted out and recorded by Sipes, with a stubby pencil, on the inside of the shanty door where the accounts were kept. The nets had been lifted in the early morning and the supply was abundant. When John had sold the fish the proceeds were to be divided equally.

After John and his aged horse "Napoleon" had left with the slimy merchandise, the old ship-mates sat down and considered the apparatus.

To this primitive coast, torn by the storms and yellowed by the suns of thousands of years, where elemental forces had ruled since the beginning, had come a strange and misfitting thing. It seemed an unhallowed and discordant intrusion into the Great Harmonies. Somehow we can, in a measure, be reconciled, poetically, to the use of steam, without great violence to our worship of the grandeur of nature's forces, but there is

## RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

no poetry in a gasoline engine. It is a fiend that wars upon things spiritual. Its dissonant soul-offending clatter on the rivers that flow gently through venerable woods, and out in the solitudes of wide and quiet waters is profanation.

Utilitarianism and ideality clashed when the motor touched the beach, but these things did not disturb Sipes and Saunders, engaged in the contemplation of the machine, as bewildered savages might gaze upon a fragment of a meteor that had dropped out of the sky from another world.

After a while they lugged it to the shanty. "I could 'a' carried it alone if I'd 'a' had one o' them darby hats on!" declared Sipes.

They spent long hours over the book of instructions, and the light in the shanty burned far into the night. They carefully and repeatedly examined the various parts in connection with the text. There were some words which they did not understand, but they finally felt that they had mastered the problem.

Saunders remarked, as they turned into their bunks, "I guess we got 'er, Sipes. We'll pour in the juice an' start 'er up in the mornin'. Then we'll buzz off on the lake an' look at the nets."

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

"She oughta have a name on 'er, like a boat," suggested Sipes. "S'pose we call 'er the 'Anabel,' er sump'n like that?"

"'Anabel' ain't no kind of a name fer anythin' o' this kind. I seen that name on a sailboat once't that didn't make no noise at all, an' this thing will. Wot's the matter with 'June Bug'?"

"All right," said Sipes, "'June Bug' she is, now let's go to sleep."

Loud snores resounded in the shanty, and the "June Bug" spent the night on the floor near the stove. Fortunately there was no leak in the gasoline tank or fire in the stove.

With the coming of dawn the old cronies hastily prepared breakfast. The lake was calm and everything seemed propitious for the initial voyage with the June Bug. That deceptive bit of machinery was carefully carried to the big flat-bottomed boat, and, after an hour of hard work, was securely attached to the wide stern. The gasoline tank was filled to the top, the batteries adjusted, the spark tested, and every detail seemed to tally with the directions. Sipes gave the fly-wheel a couple of quick turns. The motor responded instantly. The propeller ran in the

## RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

air with a cheerful hum, and the regular detonations of the little engine awoke the echoes along the shore.

With shouts of boyish glee the old shipmates pushed the big boat over the rollers on the sand and down into the water. There was much discussion as to which should run the engine and steer. Sipes produced a penny and, by flipping it skilfully, won the decision.

"I don't s'pose they's any use takin' the oars, but I'll put 'em in," he observed as he threw them into the boat.

Saunders complacently took his place forward. Sipes gave the boat a final shove and jumped in. He pushed it well out with one of the oars, and turned and looked with pride on the wonderful labor-saving device on the stern. It seemed too good to be true.

"Say, Bill, to think that us fellers c'n go hundreds o' miles out'n the lake, if we want to, an' ev'rywhere else, an' let this dingus do all the work. We c'n set an' smoke an' watch the foam, an' listen to the hummin' o' the Bug. I've heard fellers go by way out b'yond the nets with them choo-choo boats, but I never seen wot did it



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

before. Gosh! but this is fine. Now all we gotta do is to touch 'er off an' away we go!"

The old man's single eye beamed with enthusiasm, as he grasped the handle and made the prescribed turns. The result was a couple of pops and some coughing sounds somewhere in the concealed iron recesses.

"Guess she's coy, an' I didn't give 'er enough. I'll whirl 'er some more." His efforts were again ineffectual.

"Lemme try 'er," pleaded Saunders.

"Not on yer life! You keep off. You don't know nothin' 'bout machines. She'll be all right in a minute. Gimme that book!"

The boat drifted sideways for some time while Sipes studied the directions and puttered over the parts with various tools.

"I'll jolly 'er up with the screw-driver an' monkey-wrench, an' she'll feel better." He tinkered and cranked for nearly an hour, during which time Saunders offered many ill-received suggestions. Then came a torrent of invective.

"You got too many whiskers to swear like that," remarked Saunders, "you'll burn 'em."

"Never you mind, I'm watchin' 'em! The man

## RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

wot 'ud make a thing like this, an' take good cash money fer it, er even fish, oughta be cut up an' sizzled!" he declared. "The skin's all offen my hands, an' I wish the devil wot built this gas bug 'ud 'ave to keep 'is head in hot tar 'til she went. Come 'ere, Bill, an' start 'er up. You seem to know so much about it."

They exchanged places and Sipes glared maliciously at the rebellious motor from the bow. Saunders put his pipe in his pocket, produced a chunk of "plug twist," and bit off a large piece. He stowed it comfortably and considered the problem before him. After a couple of hours of fruitless efforts the profanity in the boat became unified and vociferous. The ancestors of the makers of the motor, and those of the man who had it last, as well as the undoubted destiny of everybody who had ever had any connection with it, were embraced in sulphuric execration. John was, in a way, excepted. He "meant well," but he was "a damned old fool."

After this general vituperation the old sailors rested for a while and rowed back. The constant cranking had turned the propeller a great many times. The boat had made erratic headway and

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

was quite a distance from shore. They landed, pulled the boat out on the sand with the windlass, and retired to the shanty for lunch and consultation.

Saunders strolled out a little later, with a piece of cold fried fish in his hand, and looked the motor over again. He gave the fly-wheel a careless turn and the engine started off gayly. Sipes heard the welcome sound and ran out, spilling his coffee over the door step. Lunch was discontinued, and the boat was re-floated. There was more cranking, but no answering vibrations. With more profanity the craft was restored to its berth on the sand, and another retreat made to the shanty.

"The Bug'll run all right on land," declared Sipes, "an' we'll turn the propeller so's the edges'll be fore an' aft, an' belay it. We'll bend a rim on it an' fasten some little truck wheels on the bottom o' the boat. Then we'll run the ol' girl up an' down on the hard sand 'long the edge o' the water. We won't go in the lake at all 'til we git 'er well het up, an' then we'll turn 'er in sudden an' cut them lashin's. She won't know she's in an' 'way she'll go."

For many days the old shipmates struggled

## RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

with the obstinate mechanism. It once ran for an hour without a break and they were jubilant. "Some gas bug that!" Saunders exclaimed joyfully, but just then it sputtered and stopped. They were quite a ways out, and the oars had been forgotten. Fortunately there was a light in-shore breeze and they drifted to the beach about two miles from home.

The oars were finally procured and the day closed with everything snug and tight at the shanty.

"I bet we ain't got the right kind o' gasoline," declared Sipes. "They's lots o' kinds. This 'ere wot's in the Bug ain't got no kick to it. We got too much oil mixed in it, an' we gotta git s'more."

When John came again the many troubles were related to him. He knew nothing of motors, but offered to get some more gasoline when he went to the village, and to bring the former owner of the motor over to see if he could suggest anything.

"You jest fetch that feller," said Sipes, "an' we'll take 'im out fer a nice little spin on the lake, an' we'll go where it's deep."

When the new gasoline came there was much



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

more tinkering and study of the directions. Resignation alternated with hope. Sometimes the motor would run, but more often it refused. John finally took it to the village and it was shipped to the makers. A carefully and painfully composed letter was put in the "pustoffice." The long-delayed answer was that the machine needed "overhauling," which would cost about half as much as a new one.

"The money that them pie-biters makes ain't sellin' motors, but overhaulin' 'em," declared Sipes. They sell one o' them bum things an' git their hooks in an' git a stiddy income from it long as you'll stand fer it."

It was decided, after much discussion, to send the money "fer the overhaulin'." Several months elapsed. The machine came back too late to be of further use that season, and was carefully stowed away for the winter.

"She'll prob'ly need another 'overhaulin'' in the spring 'fore she'll go, an' them fellers'll want to nick us ag'in an' keep 'er all next summer," said Saunders. "If they charged by the days they kep' 'er instid o' by the job, we'd be busted. They'll bust us anyhow, an' it might as well be

## RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

all at one crack. The Bug's goin' to stay in the house now, where she won't git wet. She ain't goin' out on the vasty deep no more 'til spring. If she gits uneasy, she c'n run 'round in 'ere."

The following May I called at the shanty and found Sipes sitting disconsolately in the door-way. After visiting with him for a while, I inquired for Saunders.

"Poor Bill's dead. I ain't got no partner now an' it's awful lonesome. He was a nice ol' feller. He fussed 'round with the gas bug fer days an' days, an' 'e couldn't make it go. He come in one night late, an' the next mornin' 'e didn't git up. He didn't seem in 'is right mind. His hand 'ud keep goin' 'round an' 'round, like it was crankin' sump'n. Then 'e'd make sputterin' sounds with 'is mouth like as if a motor was goin', an' then 'e'd keep still a long time like the Bug does, an' then begin ag'in. He wouldn't eat nothin', an' one night he said 'e guessed 'e needed overhaulin'. Then 'e said 'choo-choo! choo-choo!' three er four times, an' 'e was gone. Come on with me an' I'll show you where 'e was laid away."

We walked along the shore a short distance, crossed the beach and climbed the bluff. Near

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

the foot of an old pine was a mound, on which was scattered the dried remnants of many spring flowers, which probably had come from the low ground in the ravine. Several bunches of white trilliums, with their leaves and roots, had been transplanted to the mound, but they had withered and died. A wide board, which protruded from the ground at the head of the grave, bore the rude inscription:

### BILL SEWDER'S - DEAD

Under the name was a rough drawing of the fly-wheel of the motor, evidently made with Sipes's stubby pencil.

Chiselled epitaphs on granite tombs have said, but told no more.

We stood for some time before the mound. The old sailor wiped a tear from his single eye as we left Bill's last resting place in silence and sorrow.

"Him an' me was shipmates," said the old man sadly, as we returned to the shanty. "I off'n go up there an' set down an' think about 'im. Bill was honest. They's lots o' fellers that wouldn't swipe nothin' that was red-hot an' nailed down,

## · RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

'spesh'ly 'round 'ere, but Bill never'd touch nothin' that didn't b'long to him er me. It was the gas bug that killed 'im. Fust it made 'im daffy an' then it finished 'im. She's over there now on the stern o' the boat. I ain't never had 'er out this year, but I'm goin' to try 'er once't, jest fer Bill's sake. I think 'e'd like to have me do it."

After many condolences, and a general review of the Bug's disgraceful career by Sipes, I picked up my sketching outfit and resumed my journey, depressed, as we all are, by a sense of the transience and unsolvable mystery of life, when we have stood near one who has gone.

One calm morning, about a month later, I was rowing on the lake several miles from Sipes's shanty. A boat appeared in the distance. Its high sides, broad beam, the labored, intermittent coughing of a motor, and the doughty little be-whiskered figure on the stern seat were unmistakable. Sipes altered his course slightly so as to pass within fifty or sixty yards. I wondered why he did not come nearer. He went on by with a cheery "Wot Oh!" and a friendly wave of his hand. Evidently he was on some errand



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

that he did not want to explain, or was afraid to stop the motor, fearing that it would not start again. In a few weeks I encountered him again, under almost identical conditions. His nets were nowhere in the vicinity.

In the early fall I found an old flat-roofed hut, built with faced logs, about six miles down the coast, in the direction that the old man had been going when I had last seen him. It was in a hollow near the top of a high bluff that faced the lake. It was effectually hidden from the water and shore by a bank of sand and tangled growth along the edge of the bluff. Built against the outside was a large dilapidated brick chimney, entirely out of proportion in size to the cabin. No smoke issued from it and the place seemed deserted. I went down to the beach. A mile or so further on I found a fisherman repairing a boat on the sand, and asked him about the cabin.

"That place is witched," he declared. "Thar's funny doin's 'round thar at night an' don't you go near it. Thar's a white thing that dances on the roof. It goes up an' down an' out o' sight, an' then thar's a big thunderin' noise. I don't want to know no more 'bout it'n I know now. It



THE "BOGIE HOUSE"

*(From the Author's Etching)*



## RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

don't look right to me. I seen a wild man 'round 'ere in the woods once't, a couple o' years ago, an' mebbe he lived thar an' 'e's dead an' 'e hants that place. I don't come 'round 'ere often an' I don't want to."

My curiosity was aroused and I decided to investigate the mystery when an opportunity came. About nine o'clock one night I walked up a little trail in the sand that led toward the cabin from the woods back of the bluff. There was a dim light inside that was extinguished when I carelessly stepped on a mass of dead brush that had been piled across the path. The breaking of the little sticks had made quite a noise. Immediately a long, wavy, white object appeared over the roof of the cabin. It vaguely resembled a human shape and looked peculiarly uncanny. It swayed back and forth a few times and then seemed to grow taller. The trees beyond were partially visible through it in the uncertain light. Clearly I was in the presence of a spook. The apparition vanished as suddenly as it came. Then a dull, hollow sound came from the cabin, followed by a low, rasping, ringing noise. When it ceased, the silence was weird and oppressive.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

I went on by the structure to the edge of the bluff, where another pile of dry brush obstructed the path, and purposely walked on it, instead of over the high sand on the sides of the opening. The breaking sticks made more noise. I turned and again saw the spectral form over the roof. The wraith swayed slowly to the right and left, bent backward and forward a few times, grew longer and shorter, and disappeared as before.

In departing I stumbled over a board which stuck out of the sand, and in the dim light could distinguish the words "Dinnymite — Keep Out!" heavily scrawled on it with red paint.

Evidently visitors were not wanted, and the tell-tale brush-piles were designed to give alarm of the approach of intruders. The functions of the filmy ghost and the queer sounds were to inspire terror of the place.

I related my experience to Sipes the next time I saw him. He was deeply interested.

"Did ye hear any groanin' after them funny sounds?" he asked, with a quizzical look in his eye. I replied that I had not.

"I'll tell ye wot we'll do," said he, after a few moments of reflection, "you an' me'll go down to

## RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

that bogie house some time an' we'll butt in an' see wot's doin'. I gotta go that way in the boat next week. We'll take the gun, an' mebbe we'll blow that bogie offen the top o' the house. I seen that place last year an' I know where it is."

I did not approve of the idea of needlessly invading the privacy of anybody who did not want to see us, and who had inhospitably stocked their domain with brush-piles, ghosts, and forbidding placards, but there was a strange look in Sipes's eye that convinced me that the trip might in some way be justified.

On the appointed day we made the start. "I always spend jest an hour tunin' up the Bug," remarked the old man, as he began cranking the motor, "an' then if she don't pop, I cuss 'er out fer jest fifteen minutes, an' then I row. Hell, I gotta have some system!"

Fortunately the Bug was in good humor and took us three-quarters of the distance without a break. It then went to sleep, and half an hour's cranking and assiduous doctoring failed to arouse it.

"I got a great scheme," said Sipes. "W'en she gits like that I fasten the steerin' gear solid fer the way I want to go, an' then w'en I keep on

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

crankin', the propeller goes 'round an' 'round, an' I keep goin' some."

A little later a single turn of the fly-wheel started the treacherous device, but it was going backward. Sipes promptly seized the oars and turned the stern of the boat toward our destination.

"We got 'er now! Jest keep quiet an' touch wood! Sometimes she likes to do that, an' if I try to reverse 'er she'll balk. She thinks it's time to go home, but it ain't. This crawfish navigat'n's fine w'en ye git used to it."

We landed beyond a point on the beach which was opposite to the cabin. After we had secured the boat to some heavy drift-wood with a long rope, I followed Sipes up the side of a bluff west of the cabin. We made a detour through the woods and approached it at dusk. The dry brush-piles practically surrounded it at a distance of about fifty yards.

"Don't step on none o' them sticks," cautioned Sipes. He gave a low, peculiar whistle, which was answered from the cabin. "That there's the high sign," he remarked, as we walked to the door. We were greeted by Bill Saunders, alive and in

## RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

the flesh. He seemed surprised that Sipes had brought a visitor, but was very cordial. Sipes greatly enjoyed the situation and chuckled over what he considered an immense joke.

"You see it's like this," he explained. "Bill got to thinkin' wot's the use o' gasoline? W'y not have sump'n that 'ud run ferever, an' not 'ave to keep buyin' that stuff all the time? He'd set an' think about it in the shanty an' then somebody'd butt in an' mess up 'is thinkin'. He'd go 'way off an' set on the sand by 'isself, an' then some geezer'd come snoopin' 'long an' chin 'im, an' 'e couldn't git no thinkin' done.

"That cusséd dog o' Cal's come 'long the beach one mornin'. He's bin runnin' wild since Cal lit out. Fer years this whole country's been fussed up with 'im an' 'is doin's. He died jest as 'e was pass'n the shanty. We buried 'im up there on that bluff, an' that gave Bill an' me an idea. We fixed up the place so's people 'ud think Bill 'ad faded. Then we humped off down to this bogie house so Bill could 'ave some peace an' quiet to do 'is thinkin' in. Bill's invent'n some kind o' power that'll make ev'rythin' hum w'en 'e gits it finished. It'll put all them other kinds o' ma-



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

chines on the blink. That cusséd motor'll go 'round an' 'round, an' she can't stop ev'ry time ye bat yer eye at 'er.

"I been bringin' things down 'ere fer Bill to eat, an' sometimes little beasties come 'round the hut wot 'e shoots. We fixed up that dry brush so's nobody 'ud come snoopin' 'round without Bill knowin' it. Him an' me's goin' to divide wot we make out o' th' invention, an' we'll 'ave cash money to burn w'en 'e gits it goin'. We'll set in a float'n palace out'n the lake an' smoke *seegars*, with bands on 'em, an' let the other fellers do the fishin', won't we, Bill?"

"You bet!" responded Saunders. Just then we heard a sound of breaking sticks outside. Instantly he seized a long pole that lay along the side of the wall. It was fitted with a cross-piece and a round top. Over it was draped various kinds of thin white fabric. He mounted a box and pushed the contrivance up through a hole in the flat roof, moved it up and down, waved the upper end back and forth a few times, and withdrew it. He thumped the empty box heavily with the end of the pole as he took it in, and picked up about four feet of rusty chain, which

## RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

he shook and dragged over the edge of the box several times.

Through a small chink between the logs we saw a dim figure moving rapidly away in the gloom. We heard the crackling of the brush at the edge of the bluff, and knew that the intruder had gone.

"That feller's got the third degree all right," remarked Saunders, as he carefully put the ghost back into its place. "'Tain't often anybody comes, but w'en they do they gotta be foiled off. Them dinnymite signs helps in the daytime, but fer night we gotta have sump'n else.

"This dress'n' on the ghost mast come from Elvirey Smetters. We made up with 'er after 'er wedd'n with Cal busted up an' Cal skipped. She was wearin' most o' this tackle fer the wedd'n, an' she said she didn't never want to see it ag'in. There's a big thin veil fer the top o' the pole, an' some o' the other stuff she said was long-cherry, er sump'n like that. We keep that hatch battened down w'en it rains, but she's loose most o' the time. W'en I shove the ghost out it pushes it open."

Saunders extracted some rye bread, salt pork,

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

and cheese from a cupboard. We fried the pork in a skillet over some embers in the big brick fire-place, and toasted the cheese. After our simple meal the old man piled more wood on the fire, and we smoked and talked until quite late.

The mechanism, on which Saunders was spending his days of seclusion, reposed under some tattered canvas near the wall. He was reticent concerning it, but Sipes volunteered the information that "they was some little wood'n balls wot went up an' down in some tubes that was filled with oil, an' then they rolled 'round inside of a wheel an' come back."

"Now you shut up!" commanded Saunders. "You leave this thing to me 'til I git it done, an' then you c'n talk 'til yer hat's wore out. They ain't no use talkin' 'til we git somew'eres, an' then we won't 'ave to talk. Wait 'til I git some little springs that'll spread out quick an' come back slow, an' we'll be through."

Saunders's mind was struggling with the eternal and alluring problem of perpetual motion. He was groping blindly for the priceless jewel that would revolutionize the world of mechanics.

It was after midnight when we bade him good-

## RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

by, and departed through the moonlit woods for the beach.

We left the old man in the company of his fire, and is there greater companionship? It is in our fires that we find the realm of reverie. The fecund world of fancy reveals its fair fields and rose-tinted clouds in the vistas of shimmering light. Memory brings forth pages that the years have blurred. Fleeting filaments of faces wondrous fair, that long ago faded into the mists, smile wistfully, in halos of tremulous hues, and vanish. Slow-moving figures, crowned with wreaths of gray, sometimes linger, turn with looks of tender mother love, and dissolve in the curling smoke. The years that have slumbered in the old logs come forth at the touch of a familiar wand, and a soft light illumines chambers that time has sealed. The grim realities are lost in the glow of our hearth. In the dreamland of the fire we may ride noble steeds and soar on tireless pinions. We see heroes fight and fall. Cities with gilded walls and bright towers, broad landscapes, enthralling beauty, leaves of laurel on triumphant brows, majestic pageants, and acclaiming multitudes, are pictured in the flickering flames.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

On the little stage under the arch of the fireplace the puppets come and go, — the comedies and the tragedies, the laughter and the sorrow. The dramas of hopes and fears are enacted in shifting pantomimes that melt away into the gloom.

Our hearth-stones are the symbols of home. We go forth to battle when their sanctity is imperilled. It would be a desolate world without our fires. Winding highways lead through them on which he who travels must mark the light and not the ruin. He must feel the glow and not the burning, and be far beyond the ashes when they come.

In the twilight, when our lives become gray, and only the embers lie before us, we can still dream, if our souls are strong. If we have learned to live with the ideals we have created, instead of charred hopes, golden visions may linger in the mellow light. Happy hours, as transient as the fitful flames, may dance again, and shine among the smouldering coals.

The grizzled old sailor, who had been fortune's toy, and had been cast aside, may have found his solace in the visions before his fire. The pictures in it may have been of millions of wheels turned

## RESURRECTION OF BILL SAUNDERS

with the new force, myriads of aëroplanes soaring through the skies, dynamos of inexhaustible power giving heat and light, and countless looms spinning the fabrics of the world.

He may have seen himself worshipped, not for his achievement, but for his wealth, in the domain of *Vulgaria*, where *Avarice* is king — where worth is measured by dollars — where utter selfishness rules, and the cave man still dwells, veneered with a gilded tinsel of what, in his foolish pride, he thinks is civilization — where vanity parades in the guise of charity — where cruelty and greed hide under fine raiment — where human hyenas rend the weak and grovel before the strong — where the bestiality of the Hun darkens the world — where the only god is Gold, and where the idealist must fight or perish.

One night during the following spring I passed the cabin. The little structure, from which a great light might have radiated over the scientific world, was deserted. A pale, ghostly gleam was visible through the empty window frame. It might have been a phosphorescent glow from one of the decaying wall-logs, or a faint spark from the dream-fire that ever burns in the hearts of men.



IX

THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE







"Na'cissus Jackson"



## IX

### THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

**T**HERE was much bustle and preparation around the fish shanty one August morning. Hoarded on a shelf of the bluff were a lot of water-worn boards, which had drifted in along the beach at various times, or been thrown up by the storms, and gradually gathered.

The old shipmates had selected suitable pieces from the pile, and were busily engaged, with hammer and saw, in building a cabin on the big boat. It was a cumbrous and unwieldy craft, about twenty feet long, with high sides and a broad beam. For years it had been used in the work of installing the pound- and gill-nets in the lake, and for the necessary visits to them when the surf was too high for the small row-boat, which was kept for ordinary use.

The long oars, with which Sipes and Saunders had so often fought the big waves, were not exactly mated, but when the detachable motor on the wide stern failed to run, navigation was still



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

possible. A bowsprit had been added to the boat, and a mast protruded through the partially completed cabin. Many rusty nails and odd pieces entered into the building of the superstructure. A large square of soiled canvas and some miscellaneous cordage lay scattered about on the sand. Some scrawled lettering in red paint across the stern indicated that the boat was henceforth to be the *Crawfish*.

"We'r' goin' on a v'yage," explained Sipes. "We'r' goin' 'way off up the lake, an' we'll touch at diff'nt ports fer some stores we gotta have, an' then we'r' comin' back, an' we'r' goin' to a cert'n river you know 'bout, an' we'r' goin' up it. If you want to make pitchers, you c'n come 'long. We'll stop an' take you aboard w'en we come by with the stuff we gotta git."

I had learned from experience that Sipes usually became reticent when questioned too closely. It was better to let him volunteer whatever he wanted to say about his own affairs. I was careful not to evince any curiosity as to the object of the river trip, and gladly accepted the invitation, as I had intended visiting the river during the fall.

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

The shanty was stripped of most of its small movable contents, which were put on board when the additions were completed. The nets were taken into the house and piled up. The small boat was laid on top of them along the wall, and the door fastened with a rusty padlock.

Sipes remarked, as he put the key in his pocket, that "they was always some bulgarious feller rubber'n round fer sump'n light an' easy, that 'ud clean out that shanty if it wasn't batt'n'd up an' locked."

The reincarnated craft was floated, and it sailed slowly away, with the doughty mariners giving boisterous orders to each other.

A week later I heard a loud halloo, and cries of "Wot Oh!" down on the beach opposite to my camp in the dunes. I looked over the edge of the bluff and saw the *Crawfish* riding proudly on the low swells. The broad sail flapped idly in the breeze, and Saunders was ensconced on top of the cabin, smoking his pipe. Sipes had waded ashore and was waiting to help get my belongings on board.

A small tent, a supply of canned goods, sketching materials, a camera, and other items were carefully stowed. My row-boat was connected

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

with a line, and we were ready to start. We had only about fifteen miles to go, and expected to reach the mouth of the river about noon.

The cabin was characteristic of its builders. It was intended for use and not as an ornament. Ordinarily two could sleep in it comfortably, but the present cargo taxed its capacity. There was little ventilation when the door was closed. What fresh air there was entered through a pair of auger holes, which had evidently been bored for observation purposes. I suggested that the air inside would be better if the holes were larger, or if there were more of them, but Sipes claimed that they were large enough.

"Air c'n come in now faster'n you c'n breath it. Jest notice how much bigger them holes is than them in yer nose." Such logic was uncombatable and the subject was changed.

The motor worked spasmodically and we sailed most of the way. The breeze died down when we were about half a mile from where the Winding River came out of the dunes. After much cranking the motor started, but would only run backwards. We turned the stern toward the river's mouth and made fair progress.

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

"That's w'y we named 'er the *Crawfish*," explained Sipes. "We know'd we'd 'ave to do a lot o' that kind o' navigat'n'."

We ran on to a small sand-bar, which delayed us for some time, but got off with the oars. After a hard row against the current, we entered the mouth of the river, which was not over fifty yards wide. We heard the sound of music from among the decayed ruins of a pier that extended into the lake. Seated on some chunks of broken limestone, between the rotting piles, we saw a gray-haired colored man of about sixty. He was playing "Money Musk" on a mouth organ. Near him a cane fish-pole was stuck in among the rocks, and extended out over the water. He was whiling away the time between bites with his music.

"I bet that feller ain't no nigro," remarked Sipes. "He looks like a white man wot's been smoked."

The solitary fisherman regarded us with an expectant look, as we tied up to one of the piles.

"Good mawnin', gen'lemen! Does you-all happ'n to have sump'n to drink in yo' boat?"

"We ain't got nothin' wet but wot's leaked in. You c'n 'ave some o' that if you want it," Sipes



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

replied with some asperity. "Wot's the matter with the lake if you'r' thirsty?"

"Ah beg yo' pa'don, but you-all looked like gen'lemen that might have sump'n with you. This ain't thirst. Ah got a misery, an' it 'curred to me you might like to save ma life. Ah ain't had no breakfus', an Ah feels weak."

"Listen at that smoke," said Sipes, in an undertone. "Wonder if 'e thinks we'r' a float'n' s'loon?"

Evidently discouraged over his prospects with Sipes, the old darky turned to me.

"Say, Boss, will you gimme a qua'tah, so Ah c'n go an' git some breakfus'?"

We thought it better to give him some "breakfus'" from the boat, and, as it was lunch time, we passed part of our eatables over to him.

"Ah nevah had the pleas'ah of meet'n you gen'lemen befo'. Ma name's Na'cissus Jackson, an' Ah'm up heah f'om the south. Ah ce't'nly am 'bliged to you fo' this li'l breakfus'."

We talked with Narcissus for some time. Evidently he was a victim of strong drink. He had drifted into prohibition territory, the extent of which he did not know, and out of which he had no financial means of escape.

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

"Ah'm on a dry island, Boss, an' Ah don't know how Ah'm goin' to git off it. Ah was cook at the place wheah Ah wo'ked, an' Ah got fiahed just 'cause Ah didn't show up one mawnin'. They was goin' to have me 'rested fo' sump'n Ah didn't have nuff'n to do with, an' Ah come heah fo' a li'l vacation."

Sipes suggested that we ought to have a pilot to take us up the river, on account of its many sand-bars, that must have shifted since he was on it after ducks years ago.

"We oughta have somebody sett'n on top o' the cab'n to yell out, an' keep us from butt'n into sump'n w'en we'r' tear'n up stream. This ain't no canoe, an' we got import'nt business an' we don't want to git stuck," declared the old man.

"Theah's a man ovah in the village named Cap'n Peppehs, that knows all about this rivah," replied Narcissus. "S'pos'n you-all gimme a qua'tah, an' Ah'll go up an' git Cap'n Peppehs fo' you."

I agreed to furnish the coveted coin if "Cap'n Peppehs" was produced, and our new-found friend took in his pole, climbed out over the rough stone filling, and departed for the village, which was

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

only a short distance off. He soon reappeared, accompanied by a pompous, deep-voiced old man, with a red nose and scraggly whiskers, who looked us over with curiosity.

"My name's Peppers. What can I do for you?" he asked in a friendly tone.

"We'r' goin' up the river an' we don't want to git messed up on no sand-bars," replied Saunders. "If you been navigat'n' these waters, we'd like to git you to go 'long 'til we git where we want to go."

"If you'll drop me off back o' the third bend, I'll git aboard," said the old man. "You won't need no pilot after that. You c'n go on up an' not hit anythin' but float'n snags beyond that fer three miles in that craft."

He got into the boat. I handed Narcissus his "qua'tah," and he picked his way back over the rocks to his fish-pole, where, like his fabled namesake, he may have found solace in the contemplation of his image in the placid water.

"Cap'n Peppchs" examined the motor with interest. "Are you goin' to run 'er up with that?" he asked.

"Yes, if she'll go," replied Saunders, "but I bet she won't. A friend of ours that peddles

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

fish got it some'r's 'round 'ere, an' turned it over to us. If we ever cetch the feller that shifted that cusséd thing onto John, we'r' goin' to kill 'im. We got a gun in the cab'n wot's wait'n' fer 'im."

"I know sump'n 'bout them things," said the Captain, "an' mebbe I c'n start 'er." He fussed over the machine for some time, and finally got it going. With the help of the oars we made fair progress against the slow current.

"You c'n go on up now an' camp in that bunch o' timber beyond the marsh, an' you'll be all right," said the old man, when we reached the point where he was to leave us. "You'll find a mighty fine spring up there."

We thanked him warmly for his services. Sipes proffered the hospitality of a two-gallon jug, which he extracted from the pile of stuff in the cabin. It was eagerly accepted. He wished us good luck, and disappeared.

"That'll make 'is nose bloom some more," remarked Sipes. "He's a nice ol' feller, but wot's springs to him? It wasn't no green peppers 'e was named after."

The river made many turns in its sinuous course through the marsh, and it was nearly dark when



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

we reached a hard bank at the edge of the woods.

The *Crawfish* was made fast to a venerable elm, and we went ashore.

"I'll put a couple o' extra hitches on 'er so she can't back off in the night, if the gas bug takes a notion to git busy," said Saunders, as he took another line ashore from the stern.

It was warm and pleasant, and we decided that no shelter would be necessary that night. We built a small fire against the side of a log, fried some bacon in a skillet, made coffee, and fared well, if not sumptuously, with supplies from the boat.

We sat around and talked until quite late. The object of the expedition was revealed by Saunders.

"They was a feller that come to the bogie-house one night w'en they was a big storm that 'ad come up sudd'n. He'd come from the lake, an' it was blowin' so hard that it 'ud take hair off a frog. He'd started on a long trip with a little boat. He had one o' them cusséd motors like wot we got, an' it went punk, an' 'e had an awful time git'n' in alive. He seen my light an' come up. I didn't 'ear 'im til 'e knocked, so I didn't 'ave no

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

chance to spring the ghost on 'im. W'en I seen the mess 'e was in, I took 'im in an' fed 'im an' dried 'im out 'fore the fire.

"He seemed to be a scientific feller, an' 'e told me a lot about the rivers all over the country. He said that durin' the fall 'is business was to go 'round an' buy pearls wot fishers got out o' them fresh-water clams that's all over the bottoms o' the rivers. He'd pay 'em good prices. He said the pearls 'ad thin layers on 'em, like onions, an' sometimes one would look like it was no good. Then 'e'd take a steel thing an' peel off the outside skin, an' sometimes 'e'd git one that way that was wuth five hundred dollars. Then 'e said they was button companies that 'ud buy all the shells o' the clams, so they was a lot o' money in it, even if they wasn't no pearls found. He had a little pearl in 'is pocket that 'e'd peeled. It wasn't a very good one — prob'ly wuth three er four dollars. He gave it to me fer bein' good to 'im, an' 'ere it is."

The old sailor carefully unrolled a small piece of paper, which he took out of his tobacco pouch, and produced the pearl.

"This feller gimme a little book that didn't

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

'ave no cover on, that's sent out by the gov'ment, an' it tells all about clam fish'n', an' how to make drag-hooks, an' how to rig 'em, an' drag 'em, an' all about it."

He brought out the interesting pamphlet, with the address of the giver written in pencil on one of the margins.

"The next mornin' I helped the feller put wot was left o' his boat an' motor up in the bogie-house, an' 'e went off through the woods. He said 'e'd come back some day an' git 'em.

"Invent'n's no good. We gotta git sump'n we c'n git a big bunch o' money out of. Fish'n's git'n' to be too hard work fer us. They's slews o' wealth in this water, an' we'r' goin' to git it out an' we won't 'ave to work no more. We didn't say nothin' to nobody. John come 'round an' we told 'im, but 'e's all right. This whole thing's a dark secret. It's all right fer you to know, but we gotta keep still, er the place'll be full o' flatboats an' the pearls'll be gone. Sipes an' me's seen where the mushrats 'as been pilin' the shells 'round them little places where they got holes in the banks, an' out'n the marsh where their houses are, w'en we was down 'ere duck-shoot'n'. If

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

them little beasties c'n git 'em, we c'n mop out the whole river with all that tackle that the book tells about."

"The fust thing we gotta do, after we git a flatboat built, is to git some heavy wire fer them clam drags," said Sipes. "We c'n go back to the railroad an' git some out between them telegraph poles. The wire don't cost them fellers nothin', an' it's better we should 'ave it. Tomorrer we'll rig up a reg'lar camp, an' then we'll go to work on all the things we gotta git ready so we c'n begin devastat'n them clamsies."

The old man then went over to the boat for the jug. He set it down and began working the cork out with his knife.

"I don't do much drink'n', but me an' Bill's git'n' old, an' we'r' in a my-larious country, an' we gotta have grog once an' aw'ile."

Just as the cork came out, we heard a rustle of dead leaves on the ground back of us.

"Good evenin', gen'lemen!" greeted Narcissus Jackson, as he appeared out of the darkness, and walked deferentially up to the fire. "Fine evenin', ain't it?"

"You *bet* it's a fine evenin'!" exclaimed Sipes,



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

with freezing politeness. "How fur off did you smell this jug from?"

"Ah just thought Ah'd drop 'round an' see how you gen'lemen was get'n' 'long. Ah come up in a li'l boat I got offen Cap'n Peppehs. Ah saw yo' fiah, an' Ah just come to pay ma respec's. Is you-all well an' puffec'ly comfo'ble up heah? How's you feel'n', Mr. Sipes? Seem's like you had a li'l cold this mawnin'."

"I'm better, but 'Ah feels weak,'" quoted Sipes, with biting sarcasm.

"Ah ce't'nly am glad to heah yo' voice again," continued Narcissus. "It's a long tia'some row up heah, an Ah ce't'nly am glad to find you gen'lemen all sit'n' so comfo'ble 'round yo' li'l fiah."

The veiled appeal was irresistible. Sipes handed over the jug and cup, after he and Saunders had been "refreshed," and he had pitied my teetotalism with a patronizing glance.

"That's a *nice* li'l tin cup, an' that's an awful pretty shaped jug," observed our unexpected visitor, as he affectionately watched the red liquid trickle out. "Pa'don me, but Ah always closes ma eyes when Ah take ma li'l drink, 'cause if Ah don't, ma mouth watahs so it weak'ns ma

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

whiskey." The contents of the cup instantly vanished.

We were about ready to make our arrangements for the night when Narcissus appeared. Fortunately my own supplies included a lot of mosquito netting. I got it out and he promptly offered to help. He deftly improvised an effective covering with the netting and some sticks that excited the admiration of all of us.

"If you'd git toughed up, an' raise a face o' whiskers, them skeets wouldn't chase after you," observed Sipes.

Narcissus sat on a log and did not seem inclined to go away.

"Say, Boss, will you lemme have a qua'tah to get ma breakfus' with in the mawnin'?" he asked humbly.

The request was cheerfully complied with. I really liked Narcissus. His interesting face, winning personality, and happy-go-lucky ways appealed to my sense of the picturesque. It occurred to me that if the jug could be eliminated from the situation, he would be a valuable addition to the camp. I invited him to stay all night and have breakfast with us in the morning.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

When Sipes heard the invitation accepted, he went down to the boat to satisfy himself that Saunders had locked the door when he had returned the jug to the cabin.

In the morning Narcissus volunteered to prepare our simple breakfast. He did it with such skill that we realized that our own cooking was crude and amateurish.

During the forenoon I had a long talk with him. He was stranded and would like to stay with us if we were willing. For a moderate stipend he agreed to do the cooking and make himself generally useful.

I did not wish to intrude too much on the old shipmates, and, as I wanted to be alone much of the time, and do some sketching along the river, I established my camp about a hundred yards further up on the same side of the stream. This I judged to be near enough for sociability, and far enough for privacy. Narcissus helped erect my tent, and made many ingenious arrangements for my work and comfort.

The old sailors became so enthusiastic over his cooking that they were glad to have him down with them most of the time. The sail had been

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

taken off the boat, and a "lean-to" tent rigged between two trees, where they all slept.

"You jest watch that cookie coin pancakes!" exclaimed Sipes. "He jest whisks up the dope in the pan, an' gives 'em a couple o' flops, an' they all come to pieces in yer mouth 'fore ye begin chewin'."

He seemed to anticipate all our wants. He had evidently overheard what Sipes had said about telegraph wire, and the second morning afterward there was about a hundred feet of it in camp, with a pair of heavy wire-nippers, and other tools used by repair men on the lines, which he said he had found. The next night he came in with a half-grown turkey, which he claimed he had found dead in a fence, where it had caught its neck on the barbed wire. The unfortunate bird was roasted to a beautiful brown, and I noticed that the feathers were carefully burned.

The aspect of affairs was getting serious. I took Narcissus in hand and subjected him to a thorough cross-examination. I told him that we wanted to pay for anything we used, and that he positively must not find any more young turkeys in wire fences. The telegraph wire incident was



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

perplexing. He declared that this stuff had been abandoned, and was far from the railroad. The fact that the tools and wire were somewhat rusty seemed to lend some slight color of truth to his statement, but we finally understood each other as to the rule to be followed in the future.

A cash allowance was made for the fresh vegetables, eggs, fruit, and other supplies, which he was instructed to buy around in the back country and along the river. I hoped later to discover the owner of the ill-fated turkey.

The old shipmates worked industriously. They took the *Crawfish* down the river to the village twice, and returned with cargos of second-hand lumber, with which they constructed a flatboat about ten feet long by six wide. Supports were put at the four corners, and railings nailed to the tops. They rigged a strong pole, the length of the platform, along which they attached four-foot wires eight inches apart. At the ends of these were the four-pronged clam-hooks. Lines ran from the ends of the pole to a centre rope, by means of which the device was attached to the flatboat and dragged in the river. When the hooks came in contact with the unsuspecting mol-

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

lusks, lying open on the bottom, they were to close their shells on them tightly, and thus their fate would be sealed. When the pole was pulled out sideways, with the big rope, the bivalves would hang on its fringe of dangling wires, like grapes on pendant vines.

Our "cookie" was assiduous in his camp duties. He procured some flat stones, which he skilfully piled so as to confine his fire. Heavy stakes were driven into the ground, and another laid across, with its ends in the forked tops. The cross-piece supported the iron kettle, with which he performed mysterious feats of cookery. He improvised a broiler with some of the telegraph wire, and baked delicious bread and biscuits in a reflecting oven, made of a piece of old sheet-iron. He was very resourceful. From somewhere beyond the confines of the dark forest he obtained materials for menus that exceeded our fondest hopes.

He spent a great deal of time off by himself, and would often drop around where I happened to be sketching. We had many confidential talks. He confessed that drink was his besetting sin. He had generally been able to get good jobs, but

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

invariably lost them when he drank. Some day he was "goin' to sweah off fo' good." The poor fellow was floating wreckage on that poison stream of alcohol that our false conception of economics permits to exist. It was battering another derelict along the rocks that line its sinister shores.

He had attached himself to us like a stray dog. His moral sense had been blunted by his infirmity, but, under proper influences, his reclamation was possible. Narcissus was a strong argument in favor of compulsory prohibition, for he was beyond his own help.

The old shipmates agreed with me that he ought to be kept away from temptation as much as possible, "spesh'ly," said Sipes, "as we ain't got none too much in the jug. It ain't fit fer nobody that's under sixty-seven. Young fellers oughta let that stuff alone. They git filled up with it an' it runs down in their legs an' floats their feet off."

Narcissus's ancestry was mixed. He had some white blood, and one of his grandfathers was an Indian. Though the African characteristics predominated, there were traces of both the white man and the Indian in his face. It may have

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

been a remnant of Indian instinct — a mysterious call of the blood — that lured him to the dune country, where the red men were once happy, when he got into trouble. Possibly it was the sixth sense of the Indian that led him up the river to the jug, on the night of our arrival, or, as Sipes remarked, "mebbe the perfumery got out through the cork an' drifted over 'im w'en 'e was roostin' on them rocks."

He cooked some carp, which he had caught in the river, and was much disappointed when we found them unpalatable. The following evening he compounded a delicious sauce, with which he camouflaged the despised fish almost beyond recognition, but their identity was unmistakable. Sipes declared that "the dope on them carps is fine, but I don't like wot it's mixed with." He ate the sauce and threw his piece of fish out among the trees. The next morning he saw a crow drop down and eat it.

"That ol' bird's been through enough to know better'n that," he remarked.

The fish that came to us from the land of the Hun, and now infests our inland waters, has little to commend it. It is objectionable wherever



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

it exists. It breeds immoderately, eats the spawn of respectable fish, and begrimes the pure waters with its hog-like rooting along the weedy bottoms. It is of inferior food value and pernicious. No means of exterminating these noxious aliens have been discovered. Like the Huns, they have all of the instincts of marauding swine, without their redeeming qualities.

"These heah cahp ah funny fish," said Narcissus. "A gen'leman tol' me a few yeahs ago of a cahp that was caught in the Mississippi rivah that was ve'y la'ge. They opened 'im an' found a gold watch an' chain that 'e'd swallowed, an' the watch was tickin' when they took it out, an' theah was a cha'm on the chain, an' inside the cha'm was a li'l pict'ah of a young lady. The young man that caught the cahp found that young lady an' theah was a wedd'n. Of co'se Ah didn't see the watch, er the young man, but that was the tale Ah hea'd. Theah's been some awful wonde'ful things happened down on that Mississippi rivah."

"Gosh! if them Dutch fish 'ave got timepieces in 'em, mebbe we better pursue 'em instid o' clams," remarked Sipes. "Them carps c'n live on land

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

pretty near as well as they do in water. They'r like mudturkles. Bill an' me seen a big one once't, that was in a little puddle on some land that 'ad been flowed over. We thought prob'ly the water'd gone down an' left 'im stranded. His back stuck out o' the puddle an' was all dry an' caked with mud. Mebbe he'd been out devastat'n' the country fer watches an' jools, er sump'n, in the night, an' 'ad jest stopped at that hole fer a little rest on 'is way back."

We spent many interesting evenings around the old shipmates' camp fire. Sipes and Saunders related marvellous tales of the sea. Narcissus told many ornate yarns that he had picked up during his checkered life, and sang negro revival songs and plantation melodies. The bleached skeleton of some animal in the woods had provided him with material for two pairs of "bones," with which he was an adept. His mouth organ was a source of much entertainment. Sipes's favorite was "Money Musk," the merry jingle that came over the water when we entered the river, and he often asked Narcissus to "play that cash-money tune some more."

When the clam-boat was completed, and fully

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

rigged with its paraphernalia, it was pushed out into the slow current. It was controlled with the oars from the *Crawfish*. The pole, with its pendant wires, was dropped over the side, and actual operations began. A bench had been erected in the middle of the rude craft, before which Sipes stood, flourishing a stubby knife, ready to open the mollusks and remove their precious contents. He had a small red tin tobacco box, with a hinged cover, which he intended to fill with pearls the first day.

"Let's pull 'er up now," he suggested, after the flatboat had drifted about a hundred feet downstream. Saunders lifted in the tackle. Two victims dangled on the wires.

"Gosh, this is easy! Gimme them clams!" They were eagerly opened, but careful scrutiny revealed no pearls. "I guess them damn Dutch fish 'ave got 'em, like they did that watch Cookie told about. Heave 'er over an' we'll try 'er ag'in, Bill."

The first day's work was fruitless, as were many that followed. The clam-hooks frequently got snagged, and seemed to bring up everything but pearls. Once an angry snapping-turtle was

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

thrown back. An enormous catfish, whose meditations on the bottom had been violently disturbed, was pulled to the surface, but escaped.

"Mebbe we'll cetch a billy-goat if this keeps up," remarked Sipes.

The old men toiled on with dogged persistence. One Sunday morning an aged bivalve was pulled up and a pearl, over three-eighths of an inch in diameter, fell out on the bench when Sipes's knife struck the inside of the shell.

"Hoo-ray!!! Here she is!" he yelled.

"Be quiet, y'ol' miser! Gimme that," commanded Saunders.

He examined it closely and compared it with the one the wrecked pearl-buyer had given him.

"How much d'ye think that onion-skinner'd give us fer that?" asked Sipes, anxiously.

"It's about three times as big, an' it's rounder. It oughta be wuth fifteen er twenty dollars," replied Saunders, as he put it with the other specimen and rolled it up in the soiled paper.

"Here, Bill, you can't do that! Gimme that jool. It's gotta go in the box." Saunders surrendered the pearl, and Sipes carefully put it where it belonged.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

"We ain't goin' to fuss with no button companies, w'en we c'n find them things," declared Sipes, as he kicked the pile of empty shells overboard. "That ain't no money fer a jool like that. Wot are you talk'n' about? You don't know nothin' 'bout pearls. I bet it's wuth a thousand dollars right now, an' mebbe it'll be wuth two thousand if we git that feller to peel it. I bet all them jools has to be peeled."

That part of the pearl-buyer's talk with Saunders that related to the removal of the layers, and the comparison of a pearl's structure with that of an onion, had strongly impressed Sipes, and he generally referred to him as "the onion-skinner."

During the rest of the day he shook the box frequently to assure himself that the pearl was still there.

Various "slugs," pearls of irregular shape and of little value, were found during the next week, and the increasing spoil was gloated over at night.

Narcissus was sometimes added to the working force on the flatboat, which was taken up stream as far as the depth permitted, for a fresh start.

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

"We'r' goin' to drag this ol' river from stem to gudgeon," declared Sipes. "W'en we git through the mushrats'll have a tough time hustl'n' fer food. We'll git back in the marsh where the big clams stay in them open places 'mong the splatter-docks, where all them lily-flowers grow, an' we'll git some jools that it won't do to drop on yer foot. I seen a clam in the marsh once't that was over eight inches long, an' I bet 'e was a hundred years old."

One night Narcissus tied his little boat to a tree near the spring. He left some fresh vegetables in it, which he had procured up the river. In the morning it was discovered that the boat had been visited. The unknown caller had eaten most of the supplies. Fragments were scattered about, but no tracks were visible. A pile of green corn and some melons met the same fate a few nights afterward, and Sipes decided to ambush the visitor.

He lay on his stomach in the dark, with his gun beside him, and waited. About midnight he heard splashing in the shallow water along the bank, and, a moment later, the dim light revealed a spotted cow helping herself liberally to the con-

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

tents of the boat. Evidently she had forded the river somewhere up stream, and had accidentally found a welcome base of supplies.

"Come 'ere, Spotty!" Sipes called softly, as he cautiously advanced. The friendly marauder did not seem at all alarmed, and submitted peacefully to the coil of anchor rope that was taken from the bottom of the boat and gently slipped over her horns. She was led out of the water and tied to a tree. Sipes procured a tin pail at the camp, and "Spotty" yielded of her abundance.

There was cream for our coffee the next day. Spotty was nowhere visible. The old man had conducted her into the woods and "anchored 'er," with a stake and a long rope, in a hidden glade, where there was plenty of grass.

The following evening we were enjoying our pipes, while Narcissus was cleaning up after a delicious dinner. An old man with a heavy hickory cane hobbled into camp. His unkempt white beard nearly reached his waist. His shoulders were bent with age. He appeared to be over eighty.

"Hello, Ancient!" was Sipes's cheery greeting, as the patriarch came up to the fire.

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

"Good evenin'!" responded the visitor.  
"How's the clam fish'n'?"

"Jest so-so," replied Saunders. "Have a seat."

He gave the old man a box, with an improvised back, to sit on, and, after a few remarks about the weather, our caller explained that he had lost a cow, and wondered if we had seen anything of her.

"Wot kind of a look'n' anamile was she?" inquired Sipes.

"Gray, with a lot o' black spots on 'er. One horn bent out forrads, an' the other was twisted back, an' she had a short tail. She's been roamin' in the woods a good deal lately, an' last night she didn't come home. I thought I'd come down this way an' see if I could locate 'er."

"I seen a cow like that yisterd'y," replied the culprit. "She was over on the other side o' the river, an' come down to drink. She prob'ly mosies 'round nights like that 'cause she's restless. Her tail's bobbed an' she can't switch away the skeets. She'll prob'ly show up all right."

"Yes, I s'pose she will. Guess I won't worry about 'er." The visitor's eyes wandered about the camp. I had noticed a small brown turkey



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

feather on the ground, near where Sipes sat, but that wily strategist had deftly slipped it into his side pocket.

Evidently the industry on the river had been duly observed by the scattered dwellers in the back country, for our caller seemed to know all about us. He understood that I was "drawin' scenes 'round 'ere." Possibly some unknown observer had, at some time, come near enough to see what I was doing, and noislessly retreated.

Sipes went down to the cabin of the *Crawfish*, and returned with the jug. "Wouldn't ye like to 'ave a little sump'n, after yer long walk?" he asked.

"B'lieve I would!"

"Say w'en," said Sipes, as he tilted the jug over the cup.

"Jest a leetle, not more'n a thimbleful!"

"Some thimbles is bigger'n others," observed the old sailor, as he half filled the cup.

While protesting against the liberal offering, the old man disposed of the "little sump'n" with much relish.

Narcissus watched the proceedings from behind his kitchen bench with appealing eyes.

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

"How long you been liv'n' 'round 'ere, Ancient?" asked Sipes.

"I come here in the fall o' forty-eight. It was all open water whar that slough is then. It's weeded up sence. We used to chase deer out all over the ice thar in the winter. They'd slip down an' couldn't git up, an' we got slews of 'em that way. In the fall we'd find 'em on the beach 'long the big lake. We'd shoo 'em out in the water, an' then stay 'long the shore an' yell at 'em an' keep 'em from comin' in. They'd swim 'round fer a couple of hours, an' they'd git so tired the waves 'ud wash 'em in, an' we'd cetch 'em. We'd lay up enough meat to last all winter.

"We had to save amminition, fer we had to go twenty miles to the trading post fer wot we used. The Injuns was thicker'n hair on a dog 'round 'ere then. Many's the time, in the summer, I've looked down the marsh an' seen 'em set'n' on the mushrat houses suckin' wild duck eggs wot they'd found 'round in the slough."

"I bet them was big pearls wot they was munchin' on," observed Sipes.

Not noticing the interruption the Ancient continued.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

"They was so many wild ducks an' geese 'round 'ere in the fall, that you didn't 'ave to shoot 'em at all. You c'd go down on that sand-spit whar the river runs out o' the marsh, jest 'fore daylight, w'en they was comin' out, an' knock 'em down with a stick. They'd fly so low, an' they was so thick you couldn't miss 'em, an' you c'd git all you c'd carry."

"Gosh! Let's give 'im another drink!" whispered Sipes.

"Them days is all gone. Sometimes you see ducks hereabouts, but the sky's never black with 'em like it used to be. Thar was millions o' wild pigeons 'ere too. They'd set on the dead trees so thick that the branches busted off, an' thar was eagles 'ere that used to fly off with the young pigs, an' I've killed rattlesnakes over in the hills as thick as yer arm, an' eight feet long, but they've been gone fer years.

"Thar was tall pine all through this country then, but it's been cut out. Pretty near ev'ry mile 'long the big lake thar's old piles stick'n' up. Them was piers that the logs was hauled to with oxen an' bob-sleds. The logs was loaded from the piers onto schooners that carried 'em off on

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

the lake. I used to work at the loggin' in the winter.

"Ev'ry now an' then we'd git a b'ar, an' we used to find lots o' wild honey. The wolves used to chase us w'en they was in packs, but w'en one was alone 'e'd always run. Thar's been some awful big fires through 'ere. Once it was all burnt over fer fifty miles."

"That ol' mossback knows a lot, don't 'e?" whispered Sipes to me, as the narrator paused to light his pipe.

"Them pearls you fellers er fish'n' fer reminds me of a story. Thar was a lot o' Injuns lived 'ere at this end o' the marsh long about sixty-three. Thar was an' ol' medicine-man that 'ad gathered about a peck o' them things, big an' little, an' kep' 'em in a skin bag. Thar was a bad Injun 'ere named Tom Skunk, an' 'e stole ev'rything 'e c'd lay 'is hands on. He didn't know the bag had much value, but 'e carried it off one day w'en the old man was gone. The Injuns got so mad 'bout all the meat an' skins this feller kep' takin' that they fixed it up to drill 'im out o' the country. They caught 'im an' made 'im give the ol' Injun back 'is bag. Then they told 'im



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

to vamoose. He stuck 'round fer a few days, an' one night 'e paddled down the river in 'is canoe. The ol' Injun was pretty mad. He peeked out of 'is wigwam an' seen 'im comin'. He got 'is ol' smooth-bore rifle out an' rammed a handful o' them little pearls on top o' the powder. [Groan from Sipes.] W'en Tom Skunk come by 'e let loose an' filled 'im full of 'em. Tom got away somehow, an' that was the last seen of 'im in these parts. We heard afterward that 'e went to a govament post, an' the surgeon spent a week pick'n' out the pearls an' sold 'em fer a big price.

"We used to have snapp'n' turtles in this river that was two feet across, an' they'd come out in the night after the hens. We cut the head off o' one once, an' 'e lived a week after that. He had a date, seventeen hundred and sump'n, on 'is back. He was all caked up with moss an' crusted shell, so we couldn't quite make out the year. Somebody must 'a' burnt it on with a hot iron.

"All the ol' settlers in these parts are dead now, 'ceptin' me, an' I'm git'n' pretty feeble, an' don't git 'round like I used to. I'm eighty-four an', damn 'em, I've buried 'em all!"

He reached for his hickory cane and rose painfully.

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

"I guess I gotta be goin' 'long now, fer it's git'n' late. If you see anything o' my cow, I wish you'd let me know."

We loaned him a lantern and bade him good-night, as he limped away through the woods.

After the departure of our entertaining visitor, we took Sipes to task about the cow. Under gentle pressure, he reluctantly agreed to release the animal, and left for the glade, where Spotty was secreted. I noticed that he took a pail with him.

Spotty visited the camp several times during the next week, and the menus were enriched with dishes that would have been otherwise impossible. I suggested that something ought to be done for the Ancient to even things up.

"All right," said Sipes, "we'll have Cookie take 'im up a big bunch o' carps, so 'e c'n 'av' some fish. Gosh! We gotta have milk."

By the use of delicate diplomacy and confidential explanation, I amicably adjusted the milk difficulty with Spotty's owner, and arranged that the faithful animal should furnish us with two quarts a day. The old settler was very tolerant and reasonable, and I had no trouble about the

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

matter at all. He often came to see us, and brought welcome additions to our food supplies.

The golden fall days and the cool nights came. The pearl hunting and the genial gatherings at the camp fire continued. The destruction of the unios in the river went on with unabated zeal. Many hundreds of them were opened and thrown away. Man, the wisest, and yet the most ignorant of living creatures, lays waste the land of plenty that prodigal nature has spread before him.

The tin box was nearly full of specimens, varying in size, shape, and color. The attrition which Sipes caused by frequently shaking the box dulled the lustre on many of the pearls. Saunders discovered the damage, and afterwards they were properly protected. He suggested that we get a baby-rattle and a rubber teething ring for Sipes, so he would not "have to amoose 'imself shakin' the shine offen them pearls."

The dauntless toilers refused to be driven in by unfavorable weather. One morning dawned with a cold drizzly rain, but it was the day of days on the flatboat.

"Whoop! Whoop! Holy jumpin' wild-cats!" shrieked Sipes, hysterically.

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

A resplendent oval form, as large as a filbert, iridescent with subtle light and flashing hues of rose and green, rolled out of a bivalve which he had partially opened. Its satiny sheen gleamed softly in the palm of the old man's gnarled and dirty hand — a pearl that might glow on the bosom of a houri, or mingle in the splendor of a diadem.

"Avast there, you ol' money-bags! You'll founder the ship!" yelled Saunders, as they danced with delirious joy in each other's arms.

Work was suspended for the day. The prize was proudly and tenderly carried to camp, with great rejoicing.

"Come 'ere, you Jack o' Clubs, an' see wot a million dollars looks like!" shouted Sipes to Narcissus, who was hurrying to meet them.

Saunders told me, when we met that night, that "Cookie's eyes stuck out like grapes, an' you c'd 'a' brushed 'em off with a stick w'en 'e seen wot we had."

Unfortunately the jug was much in evidence. Narcissus responded many times to Sipes's insistent demands for "that cash-money tune." The old shipmates danced in the flickering fire-light. Vociferous songs awoke the echoes in the



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

surrounding gloom of the damp forest. The big pearl was repeatedly examined, and much speculation was indulged in as to its value, which was considered almost fabulous. The hilarity extended far into the night, until the revellers fell asleep from sheer exhaustion. The jug was left on the grass, and Narcissus fondled it between drinks, while the magnates slumbered.

"It's only the rich an' fuzzy that enjoys this life," observed Sipes with a prolonged yawn, when I came over and woke him in the morning. "Think o' them val'able clams wot sleeps out there in the bottom o' the river. The little runts can't swim 'round, an' they can't chase food. They 'ave to take wot's fed 'em by the current. They can't smoke 'er talk, an' they can't 'ave nothin' but water to drink. They jest lay there an' make them little jools fer me an' Bill. That big feller'd prob'ly been wait'n' fer us all summer to come 'long an' save 'im from them mushrats."

The happy old sailor's remarks suggested the thought that most of the great intellectual pearls in the world have come from the minds of those who have pondered long in silent and secluded places.

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

"Hi there, Bill, you ol' lobster, wake up. I want some breakfast. Where's that cusséd cookie?" he demanded.

We found poor Narcissus reclining against a tree — a pitiful picture. The jug sat near him. The cup, mouth organ, and his tattered cap were lying about on the grass. A primitive human animal had found satiety in what he craved.

"Gosh! Look at that id'jut!" exclaimed Sipes, as he picked up the jug. "They was two gallons in 'ere w'en we started out, an' they was about two quarts last night. This soak's spilt it all into 'im 'cept about a pint, an' we gotta save it fer snake-bites."

"Say, Boss, lemme off!" pleaded the culprit, weakly. In his confused brain there was a sense of trouble that he could not quite comprehend.

We got our own breakfast. Narcissus watched us helplessly from under his tree. He appeared quite sick.

"That cookie's blue 'round the gills," remarked Sipes. "He'd jest as lief 'ave a pestilence come now as to see whiskey. His stummick's gone punk. His eyes looks like holes burnt in a blanket, an' 'is head don't fit 'im. He needs a few

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

kind words, an' I'm goin' to take 'im over a little piece o' the dog that bit 'im."

He filled the cup to the brim and offered it to the sufferer.

"Here, Cookie, cheer up! Here's some nice little meddy. You swallow it an' you'll feel fine!"

Pathos and misery were written on Narcissus's doleful face, as he mutely protested against the cup being held where he could smell its contents. Sipes, with refined cruelty, sprinkled some of the liquid on the penitent's coat, so that the odor would remain with him, and chuckled, as he returned the unused portion to the jug, which he locked in the boat's cabin.

One night there was a light frost. When morning dawned there was a crispness in the air. A spirit of foreboding was in the forest, and a sadness in the tones of the wind that rustled the weakly clinging leaves. The wood odors had changed. Dashes of color brilliance were scattered along the edges of the timber on the river banks. The deep green of tamaracks, and flaming scarlet of vines and dogwoods, relieved by backgrounds of subtle and delicate minor hues, swept along the borders of the great marsh, and



THE REQUIEM OF THE LEAVES

*(From the Author's Etching)*





## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

stole away into veils of purple haze beyond. Fruition and fulfilment had passed over the hills and through the low places, and it was time for sleep.

The tired grasses in the marsh were bent and gray. Among their dull masses the current of the open stream crept in a maze of silvery lines, that wound back in many retreating loops, and then moved slowly on, seemingly reluctant to enter into the oblivion of the depths beyond the passage through the dunes.

Wedges of wild geese trailed across the great clouds — valiant voyagers along the unseen paths of the sky. In the darkness their turbulent cries came out of the regions of the upper air, faint echoes of the Song of Life from the vault of the Infinite.

“Them winds ’as got an edge on ’em. I guess we gotta git out o’ here, Bill,” declared Sipes, as he warmed his numbed hands before the fire. “The news o’ that jool’ll git ’round, an’ the fust thing we know this country’ll be full o’ robbers. They’ll swipe it, an’ you an’ me’ll ’ave to work the rest of our lives, an’ mebbe eat carps, instid o’ set’n’ on soft cushions an’ smok’n’. The clams is ’bout all

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

cleaned out an' we got a fort'n'. Wot's the use o' try'n' to grab it all? We got plenty to last us, an' we can't take no cash-money to the graveyard with us. We'll git hold o' that onion-skinning feller, an' mebbe 'e c'n peel some o' them other jools, an' make 'em wuth a lot more.

"We c'n do anything we want to now. Mebbe we'll buy a big red church fer Holy Zeke, so 'e c'n git in it an' spout damnation up the chimblly all by 'imself, an' not come 'round us. I wonder wot that ol' cuss is doin' nowdays? Anyway, we'll buy 'im a new hard hat, an' a ticket that'll carry 'im way off."

The pearls were carefully concealed on the *Crawfish*. The sail, which had done duty as a shelter on shore, was put back in its place, and everything was snugly stowed on board. The boat that Narcissus had borrowed "offen Cap'n Peppehs" was attached, with my own, to the stern of the larger craft, and we were ready to push out into the current, when we saw Spotty contemplating us with mild eyes from among the trees.

"Gosh! I gotta bid that ol' girl good-by," exclaimed Sipes, as he seized a pail and nimbly

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

hopped ashore. When he returned the homeward voyage began.

We threaded the sinuous channel for hours before we came to the sand-hills.

"This big dump's full o' jools," remarked Sipes, as he indicated the marsh with a broad sweep of his hand. "Next year we'll come down 'ere an' bag the whole bunch."

Narcissus, who had stuck by us faithfully, was anxious to go and spend the winter at the fish shanty. The old men were immensely pleased both with him and his cooking, and cheerfully consented.

The current took us through the hills, and we tied up at the dilapidated pier. We were out of tobacco, and other small necessities, and needed some gasoline, as Sipes wanted to "tune up" the motor, in case we found no wind on the lake. Narcissus was provided with a list, some funds, and the gasoline can, and he went ashore. Sipes considered that he was perfectly reliable up to five dollars in prohibition territory. We saw him swinging his can gayly, as he walked up the little path that led to the village and disappeared around a bend. We had had a wonderful trip, and everybody was in high spirits.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

We waited nearly an hour for Narcissus, but he did not return. We got ashore and went up to the general store, where he was to do his shopping, but he had not been seen. Further search around the village was fruitless. Thinking that he might have returned to the boat by another route, we retraced our steps, and found the can in some weeds near the bend where we last saw him.

With sudden inspiration, Sipes ran to the boat. He dived into the cabin, and we heard an angry yell.

"Holy Mike! He's frisked the jools!"

We hurried on board. The tin box had disappeared.

"We put 'em between them boards back o' that little cuddy-hole. He swiped 'em an' 'e's lit out! Hold on a minute!" cried the distracted old man, as, with a glimmer of hope on his pale face, he again ducked into the cabin.

"Gosh! We'r' saved!" he exclaimed, as he emerged with the big pearl. "Bully fer us! I stuck this in a crack with some paper, an' 'e missed it."

Saunders had been too much overcome by the sudden misfortune to say much. He appeared

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

crushed. His face lighted up when it was found that the disaster was not complete.

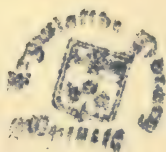
The question now was to catch Narcissus Jackson. He had had about two hours' start.

"Gimme that gun!" commanded Sipes. "I'll pot that nigger, if I git 'im inside o' fifty yards. This gun ain't loaded with no jools like that Injun's was!"

Adjectives are weapons of temperament. Sipes had a plentiful supply of both. The past, present, and future of Narcissus Jackson was completely covered by a torrent of scarifying invective.

The next day we gave up the search, in which we were excitedly assisted by the villagers and scattered farmers. We returned to the boat and rowed it out into the calm lake, where we waited for a breeze. The motor had again "gone punk."

"That smoke's jest natch'ally drifted off," remarked Sipes philosophically, as we floated idly on the gentle swells, "but we got enough to make us rich; wot do we care? I guess that 'dark secret' that Bill said this trip was, was set'n on them rocks w'en we fust come in the river. Think of all wot we done fer 'im! Me offerin' 'im that whole cupful w'en 'e was sick, an' git'n' milk fer



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

'im to cook with, an' all them things you an' Bill did, an' now 'e's hornswoggled us. They ain't no gratitude. That smoke's jest like all the rest of 'em!"

"You have had a prosperous trip," I replied. "You will probably get a high price for your big pearl, and you won't have to worry about money for quite a while. You had better get this trouble off your mind. Surplus wealth is mere dross."

"How much dross d'ye think that damn cookie'll git fer them jools?"

"He will get very little. You had spoiled the lustre on most of them by constantly shaking the box."

"If I'd knowed 'e was goin' to frisk 'em, I'd a shook the stuff'n' out of 'em!"

During a visit to the village store, Saunders had written a letter to the "onion-skinner," as Sipes persisted in calling the pearl-buyer, and mailed it to the address on the margin of the pamphlet. He described the location of the fish shanty, and informed him of the finding of the big pearl. He also told of the robbery, described Narcissus, and asked him to have him "nabbed" if he came to sell him the stolen pearls, which he

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

probably would do. Saunders spent much time writing and rewriting the letter. Sipes stood over him and cautioned him repeatedly not to say anything in it that "looked like we wanted to sell the jool."

"Cat's paws" appeared on the water. The breeze freshened rapidly, and there were white-caps on the lake shortly after we began to make fair headway. The wind increased, the boat careened under the pressure of the broad sail, and we shipped water copiously several times. Fortunately I had left my row-boat and tent with a fisherman at the village, who was to care for them during the winter, so we did not have these to bother us. I felt relieved when we saw the shanty in the distance.

"Hard-a-port, Bill," commanded Sipes in a stentorian tone as he loosened the main-sheet. We turned in toward shore. Like a roving galleon proudly returning from distant seas, with her treasure in her hold, the gallant *Crawfish* tore in through the curling waves and flying spray, and felt the foam of her home waters over her prow.

We all got soaking wet getting in through the surf. The long rope from the windlass on the



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

sand, composed of many odd pieces, knotted together, was finally attached to the iron ring on the bow, and the now historic craft was hauled out over the wooden rollers to its berth on the beach.

We had commenced taking some of the stuff out of the boat, when we suddenly paused with astonishment, and looked toward the shanty. Mingled with the voices of the wind, and the roar of the surf, we faintly, but unmistakably, heard the thrilling strains of "Money Musk" issuing from the weather beaten structure.

"Now wot d'ye think o' that!" exclaimed Sipes. "That damn cookie's in there. He don't know it's our place an' 'e thinks 'e's escaped. We got 'im trapped. Gimme the gun!

I happened to know that the gun was not loaded, and had no fears that there would be any shooting. In solid formation we marched to the shanty. The padlock on the door was undisturbed. Sipes unlocked it. Narcissus sat on the pile of nets inside and regarded us with a frightened expression. Evidently the wind had prevented him from hearing us when we landed. He seemed overawed by the presence of the gun and our angry looks.

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

"Say, Boss, lemme off!" he begged, as he looked up at me pleadingly.

"Narcissus, where are those pearls?" I demanded.

"Pea'ls? Ah don't know nuff'n 'bout no pea'ls! Ah ain't seen no pea'ls! Is theah some pea'ls miss'n'?"

"Of course they're miss'n', an' you know it, you black devil!" roared Sipes, as he cocked his gun. "You shell out them jools, er yer goin' to be shot right 'ere this minute!"

Narcissus's face turned ashen gray.

"Ah ain't nevah touched no pea'ls! Ah ain't nevah seen you gen'lemen's pea'ls since you had 'em at the camp. Gimme a Bible an' Ah'll take ma oath!"

While I knew that he was quite safe in asking Sipes for a Bible, his earnest denial seemed to have the ring of sincerity. I took Sipes aside, leaving Saunders with the now thoroughly terrified negro. He leaned against the side of the shanty and seemed in such mental agony that I felt sorry for him.

I asked Sipes to show me exactly where he had placed the tin box. With a small electric flash-

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

light we explored a deep recess between the boards back of the cuddy-hole, and found the box, wedged about a foot below where the old man had hidden it. Sipes seized it with a shout of jubilation. He and Saunders acted like a couple of small boys who had just been told that they could stay out of school and go to a circus.

The mystery of Narcissus's disappearance and his presence in the shanty was still to be explained. He was greatly relieved when the box was found, but seemed too much confused by the sudden flood of events to talk, so we let him alone. That night, after the shanty was put in order, and a fire built in the stove, he told his story.

"When Ah took that gas can, an' went fo' them things at the stoah, Ah jest thought Ah'd stop at Cap'n Peppehs's house. That's the fi'st li'l house Ah come to. Ah wanted to thank 'im fo' the boat Ah got offen 'im, an' tell 'im Ah hoped 'e was well. Ah left the can neah the path. Cap'n Peppehs asked me all about you gen'lemen, an' wanted me to come in a minute. He wanted to know what you-all had done up the rivah, an' if you got any pea'ls. Ah didn't tell 'im nuff'n. Then 'e got out 'is bottle, an' we had some drinks.

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

Then 'e asked me 'bout yo' motah, an' how you come by it. I told 'im you got it offen a fish man named John. Then 'e told me John got it f'om him, an' 'e didn't want me to let you know that."

"And to think," interrupted Sipes, "that we had that cuss right in the boat, an' didn't know it!"

"Then, aftah a while, we got to feel'n' pretty good, an' Ah done fergot all 'bout the gasoline. We looked out o' the window, an' theah was Mr. Sipes goin' 'round with 'is gun. We didn't know whethah he thought Ah'd run off with that li'l bunch o' money Ah was goin' to get the things with, er was aftah Cap'n Peppehs' 'count o' that motah, an' Ah jest thought we'd keep still fo' a while 'till Mr. Sipes put away 'is gun. Ah was sca'ed o' that gun. Aftah that Cap'n Peppehs asked me mo' about the pea'ls, an' offe'd me a li'l mo' ref'eshment. Ah must 'a' went to sleep then, an' Ah didn't wake up 'til this mawnin'. Ah saw yo' boat way out on the lake set'n' still. I shuah felt bad, an' Ah was goin' to take a boat an' row out, but ma haid hurt so Ah couldn't. Ah knew 'bout wheah you lived, 'cause Ah hea'd you talkin' 'bout it, an' Ah jest walked 'long the beach 'til Ah come to the place that had yo'



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

sign. The do' was locked, but Ah got the window open an' come in that way. Ah was ve'y ti'ed, an' laid down fo' a nap; then Ah got up an' played that li'l tune Mr. Sipes likes so much.

"Say, Ah hope you'll lemme off. Ah ain't done nuff'n so awful bad. Ah'm awful sorry Ah made all that trouble, an' had all them drinks with Cap'n Peppehs. Ah fo'got all 'bout that gasoline, an' Ah won't nevah do nuff'n like that no mo'. Mr. Sipes, does theah happ'n to be jest a few drops in the bottom o' the jug, that Ah c'd have? Honest, Ah feels weak!"

Narcissus met with the full measure of forgiveness. He had faltered by the wayside, where hosts have fallen. The mantle of charity was laid over his sin. Sipes, while usually intolerant, was mollified with the recovery of the pearls.

We all slept in the shanty that night. In the morning we saw a horse and buggy on the beach in the distance. Saunders inspected the driver attentively through the "spotter."

"That's the onion-skiner comin'," he remarked.

"Yes, an' I bet we'll be the onions," said Sipes, as he took the glass.

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

The visitor arrived and looked over the fruits of the season's work. He did not seem at all dazzled by the beauty of the big pearl. He examined it casually and laid it aside. He seemed more interested in the others.

"You be careful an' don't show no frenzy over that jool. You don't own it," cautioned Sipes, sarcastically. "You may want to buy it later if you ain't got enough cash-money now. Mebbe you know o' some rich fellers that 'ud like to buy intrusts in it with you."

A substantial offer was made for the lot. The amount mentioned was much larger than I had any idea the pearls were worth.

"They was a feller 'long 'ere yisterd'y that offered us twice as much as that, an' I told 'im 'e was a cheap skate. Wot d'ye think them are — peanuts? D'ye think we c'lected all them val'able jools jest fer love o' you? Wot d'ye s'pose we are — helpless orphants?"

Most of the day was spent in jockeying over the price. The buyer was an expert judge of human nature, as well as pearls. He exhibited a large roll of bills at a psychological moment, and became the owner of the collection.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

He drove away along the beach and turned into the dunes.

"He'll prob'ly hide some'r's off'n the woods, an' peel some o' them jools, like 'e did us," said Sipes. "He oughta fly a black flag over that buggy, so people 'ud know wot's comin'. I've seen piruts in furrin waters that was all bloodied up, but 'side o' that robber, they'd look like a lot o' funny kids. Bill, you oughta keep yer mouth shut w'en I'm sell'n' jools! You butted in all the time an' spoilt wot I was doin'. If you'd a kep' still, I'd 'a' got jest twice them figgers. By rights, I oughta keep wot's 'ere fer my half an' let you w'istle fer the half that that feller saved by you shoot'n' off yer mouth at the wrong times."

That night I sat before the dying embers of driftwood and mused over the eventful weeks.

I remembered the picturesque camp scenes; the genial gatherings around the fire; the advent of Narcissus, — his lovable qualities, frailties, and final vindication; the sociability of Spotty; the Ancient's graphic reminiscences; the finding of the big pearl, and the odd combination of childish foibles, homely wit, kindliness, cupidity,

## THE WINDING RIVER'S TREASURE

shrewdness, and primitive savagery in the old shipmates.

The mingled glories of the autumn came back, with memories of the fragrant woods; the broad sweeps of changing color over the swamp-land; the majesty of the onward marching storms; the songs of the wind through trees and bending grasses; the music and beauty of rippling currents; the companionship and voices of the wild things; the witchery of twilight mists and purple shadows, and the enchantment of moon-silvered vistas.

I felt again the haunting mystery that is over the marsh, along the river through the silent nights, and in its fecund depths, where pearls are wrought among hidden eddies.

Under the gently moving water was the dream-land of the reflections. The dark forests and the ghostly dunes hung low in the realm of unreality. Beyond them the Pleiades and Orion glowed softly in the limitless abyss that held the endless story of the stars.

The Ego, mocking the Infinite with puny dogma, in its minute orbit — a speck between two eternities — recoils in terror from the void beyond the world.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

The river bears a secret in its bosom deeper than its pearls. He who learns it has found the melodies that brood among tremulous strings in the human heart.

I meditated, and wondered if I, or the valiant crew of the flatboat, had found the Winding River's Treasure?

X

THE PLUTOCRATS





The Game Warden  
and his  
Deputy





## X

### THE PLUTOCRATS

THE invitation of the old shipmates to remain with them for a while was gratefully accepted. The witchery of the changing landscapes and the color-crowned dunes was irresistible. The society of my odd friends, which was full of human interest, and certain beguiling promises made by Narcissus, were factors that prolonged the stay.

After a week of blustery weather, and a light fall of snow, the haze of Indian Summer stole softly over the hills. The mystic slumberous days had come, when, in listless reverie, we may believe that the spirits of a vanished race have returned to the woods, and are dancing around camp fires that smoulder in hidden places. Spectral forms sit in council through the still nights, when the moon, red and full-orbed, comes up out of a sea of mist. Smoke from phantom wigwams creeps through the forest. Unseen arrows have touched the leaves that carpet aisles among the trees where myriad banners have fallen.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

Our drift-wood fire glowed on the beach in the evening. Sipes piled on all sorts of things that kept it much larger than necessary. With reckless prodigality, he dragged forth boxes, damaged rope, broken oars, and miscellaneous odds and ends, that under former conditions would have been carefully kept.

Sipes and Saunders were in high spirits. They walked with an elastic swagger that bespoke supreme confidence in themselves, and a lofty disdain of the rest of the world. There was much discussion of the plans for the future.

"We got all kinds o' money now, an' we c'n spread out," declared Sipes. "We gotta git ol' John an' 'is horse down 'ere, an' take care of 'em. That ol' nag's dragged millions o' pounds o' fish 'round fer us, an' 'e oughta have a rest. They'r' both git'n' too old to work any more, an', outside o' me an' Bill an' Cookie, them's the only ones that lives round 'ere that's fit to keep alive through the cold weather.

"We gotta haul down that ol' sign on the shanty, 'cause we've gone out o' the fish business. We'r' goin' to fix this place all over. All them fellers that has money, an' lives in the country,

## THE PLUTOCRATS

an' don't work, has signs out that's got names on 'em fer their places. I drewed out the new sign with the pencil yisterd'y, an' this is wot it's goin' to be."

He unfolded a piece of soiled wrapping paper, on which he had rudely lettered —

~~\$~~HIPMATE\$ REST

"The names won't be on it, but shipmates'll mean us all right. The sign'll still look like cash-money, an' you bet we'r' goin' to rest, so that sign's all right, an' she's goin' up."

Catfish John and Napoleon arrived the next morning.

"You can't git no more fish 'ere!" announced Sipes, after he had made his usual derisive comments on the old peddler's general appearance. "This place 'as changed hands. Some fellers own it now that don't 'ave to work. You'r' a wuthless ol' slab-sided wreck, an' you ain't no good peddlin' fish. You oughta be 'shamed o' yerself. Yer ol' horse is a crowbait, an' yer fish waggin's on the bum. You git down offen it an' come 'ere. We got sump'n we want to tell you."

John willingly admitted that all the charges



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

were true, as he slowly and painfully descended from the rickety vehicle.

"Now listen 'ere, John," continued Sipes seriously, "us fellers 'as got rich out o' the jools wot we fished out o' the river. We'r' jest goin to set 'round an' look pleasant, an' quit work'n. You've been our ol' friend fer years, an' we got enough to keep you an' Napoleon in tobaccy an' hay fer the rest o' yer lives. You're a nice pair, an' if you'll go in the lake an' wash up, we'll burn all yer ol' nets, an' the other stuff up to your place, an' yer ol' boat, too, an' you c'n come down 'ere an' live. We don't want none o' them things 'ere, fer it 'ud make us tired to look at 'em. We don't want to see nothin' that looks like work 'round 'ere, no more'n we c'n help, but you gotta help haul some lumber. We'r' goin' to tack some more rooms on the shanty. It ain't a fit place fer fellers like us to live in."

John was greatly pleased over the good fortune that had come to his friends, and happy over the plans that had been made for his future. He said little, but I noticed that his eyes were moist as he limped over to the shanty to be "introduced to Cookie."

## THE PLUTOCRATS

"Ah ce't'nly am glad to meet you, Mr. Catfish!" said Narcissus, cordially, as they shook hands. "Ah've hea'd a great deal 'bout you f'om these gen'lemen. Ah would like to make a li'l cup o' coffee fo' you. Jest have a seat an' Ah'll have it ready in jest a few minutes."

John looked at him gratefully and sat down. He was much impressed by the evidences of prosperity around him. The old pine table was covered with a cloth that was spotless, except where Sipes had spilled a "loose egg" on one corner of it. There was a bewildering array of new clean dishes and kitchen utensils about the room, and some boxes that had not yet been unpacked. Narcissus had been given *carte blanche* as to the domestic arrangements. He was chef, valet, major domo, and general manager.

"Cookie's boss o' the eats an' the beds, an' ev'rythin' else 'round the house, 'cept drinks," declared Saunders.

He had made several trips to the village with the old cronies and they had acquired a large part of the stock of the general store. Their advent must have been a godsend to the aged proprietor.

"Now, John," said Sipes, after the old man

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

had finished his coffee, "you c'n go back to yer place jest once, an' fetch anythin' you want to keep that's small, but don't you bring nothin' that weighs over a pound, an' then you come an' sleep in the cabin o' the *Crawfish* till we git the new fix'n's on the shanty. We'll feed you up so you'll feel like a prize-fighter, an' we'll make Napoleon into a spring colt. He c'n stay in the work-shed 'til we make a barn fer 'im. We'r' goin' up there tomorrer night, an' we'r' goin' to burn up the whole mess wot you leave, an' you can't go with us. We'll chuck ev'rythin' into that cusséd ol' smoke-house, an' set fire to it. Tomorrer night's the night, an' don't you fergit it!"

John stayed for a couple of hours, but did little talking. Evidently he was deeply touched. He drove away slowly up the beach toward the only home he had known for many years. His quiet, undemonstrative nature was calloused by the unconscious philosophy of the poor. Gratitude welled from a fountain deep in his heart, but its outward flow was restrained by the rough barriers that a lifetime of unremitting toil and poverty had thrown around his honest soul.

## THE PLUTOCRATS

He returned late the following afternoon. His wagon contained a few things that he said he wanted to keep, no matter what happened to him.

"Thar ain't no value to the stuff I got 'ere, 'cept to me. If you'll put this in a safe place 'til things git settled, I'll be much obliged," said the old man, as he extracted a small package from an inside pocket. He carefully opened it and showed us an old daguerreotype. A rather handsome young man, dressed in the style of the early fifties, sat stiffly in a high-backed chair. Beside him, trustfully holding his hand, was a sweet-faced girl in bridal costume. Pride and happiness beamed from her eyes.

"That thar's me an' Mary the day we was married. She died the year after it was took," said the old fisherman, slowly. There was tenderness in the quiet look that he bestowed on the picture, and the care with which he rewrapped it and handed it to Saunders for safe-keeping.

The old daguerreotype had been treasured for over half a century. I knew that tears had fallen upon it in silent hours. Its story was in the old man's face as he turned and walked over to his wagon to get the rest of his things.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

"Now, hooray fer the fireworks!" shouted Sipes, when we had finished our after-dinner pipes in the evening. By the light of the lantern, the small row-boat was shoved into the lake. John watched the sinister preparations with misgivings. As we rowed away, Sipes called out cheerily, "Now you brace up, John; you ain't got no kick comin'! You c'n stay an' play with Cookie. He'll make you some more coffee, an' you'll find a big can o' tobaccy on the shelf."

The old shipmates did not intend that any lingering affection that John might retain for his old habitat, or any heartaches, should interfere with his enjoyment of his new home, or with their delight in burning his old one. They had grimly resolved that the transition should be complete and irrevocable.

We reached the old fisherman's former abode in due time. We found the tattered nets wound on the reels, which were old and much broken. We piled all of the loose stuff on the beach around the nets, and the leaky boat was set up endwise against them. With the lantern we explored the disreputable little smoke-house. It was filled with fish tubs, bait pails, and confused rubbish,

## THE PLUTOCRATS

and was redolent with fishy odors of the past that Saunders declared "a clock couldn't tick in."

We climbed up to the shanty on the edge of the bluff. The door of the ramshackle structure was fastened with a piece of old hitching strap that was looped over a nail. We entered and looked around the squalid interior. Four bricks in the middle of the room supported a nondescript stove. A rough bench stood against the wall, and a few tin plates, cups, and kettles were scattered about. The only other room was John's sleeping apartment. A decrepit bedstead, that had seen better days and nights, an old hay mattress, a couple of much soiled blankets, a cracked mirror, some candle stubs, and two broken chairs were the only articles we found in it.

"All some people needs to make 'em happy is a lookin' glass," observed Sipes, "but ol' John ain't stuck on 'imself; wot does 'e want with it? He prob'ly busted it w'en 'e peeked in it to see if 'is ol' hat was on straight."

"I hope John's got some insurance on this place," Saunders remarked, as he dragged the mattress to the wall and piled the bedstead and chairs on

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

it. We found a bottle half full of kerosene under the bench, which we emptied over the floor.

"Now gimme a match!" demanded Sipes.

When we reached the foot of the bluff the flames were merrily at work above us. The smoke-house, and the stuff accumulated around the nets, were soon on fire. We next visited Napoleon's humble quarters on the sand, and another column of smoke and flame was added to the joy of the occasion.

"We can't leave fer a while yet," said Saunders; "no fire's any good 'less somebody's 'round to poke it."

We spent considerable time watching the fires, to assure ourselves that the destruction was complete, and that there was no possibility of the flames on the bluff getting into the woods beyond through the dry weeds on the sand. There was a light off-shore breeze, so there was little danger.

"That ol' joint's clean at last," observed Sipes, as we rowed away in the early hours of the morning.

From far away we looked upon the scene of Catfish John's dreary life, illumined by gleams from the smouldering embers that played along the face of the bluff.

## THE PLUTOCRATS

There were essentials that the old man's humble surroundings had lacked. Long sad years were interwoven with them, but the faded face in the old daguerreotype may have lighted the dark rooms and helped to make the lonely place an anchorage, for is home anywhere but in the heart? It does not seem to consist of material things. Absence, estrangement, and death destroy it — not fire. Sometimes, out of the losses and wrecks of life, it is rebuilt, but not of wood and stone.

I arranged with John to transport my few belongings to the railroad station the next day, and regretfully left the contented old mariners and their happy "cookie," who was no small part of the riches that had come from the Winding River.

On the way through the hills the old man opened his heart.

"Now wot d'ye think o' them ol' fellers? They battered 'round the seas an' they been up ag'in pretty near ev'rythin' they is. They come in these hills an' settled down to fish'n'. We alw'ys got 'long well together. I done little things fer them an' they done little things fer me. Sipes



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

is a queer ol' cod, an' so's Saunders, but all of us has quirks, an' they ain't nobody that pleases ev'rybody else. Now them ol' fellers has got rich. I don't know how much they got, but w'en anybody gits a lot o' money you c'n alw'ys tell wot they really was all the time they didn't have it. They'r' all right, an' you bet I like 'em, an' I alw'ys did. They drink some, but they don't go to town an' go 'round all day shoppin' in s'loons, like some fellers do. Mebbe they'll git busted some day, an I c'n do sump'n fer 'em like they done fer me."

I bade my old friend farewell on the railroad platform and departed.

In response to a letter sent to him in January, John was at the station when I stepped off the train one crisp morning a week after I wrote, but it was a metamorphosed John who stood before me. He was muffled up in a heavy overcoat and fur cap. He wore a gray suit, new high-topped boots, and leather fur-backed gloves. I hardly recognized him. Much as I was delighted with these evidences of his comfort, there was an inward pang, for the picturesque and fishy John,

## THE PLUTOCRATS

who had been one of the joys of former years, was gone. This was a reincarnation. The strange toggery seemed discordant. Somehow his general air, and the protuberance of his high coat collar above the back of his head, suggested an Indian chief, great in his own environment, who had been rescued out of barbarism and debased by an unwelcome civilization. He was like some rare old book that had been revised and expurgated into inanity.

"I got yer letter," said the old man, after our greetings, "an' 'ere I am! I yelled out at ye, fer I didn't think you'd know me. What d'ye think o' all this stuff them ol' fellers 'as got hooked on me?"

Napoleon, sleek and apparently happy, with a new blanket over him, was standing near the country store, hitched to a light bobsled.

I congratulated the old man and inquired about our mutual friends. After we had put the baggage and some supplies from the store into the sled, we adjusted ourselves comfortably under a thick robe, and Napoleon trotted away on the road, with a merry jingle of two sleigh-bells on his new harness.

There were no tracks on the road after we got into the wooded hills, except those made by

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

Napoleon and the sled a couple of hours before, and the cross trails of rabbits and birds that had left the tiny marks on the snow, in their search for stray bits of food that the frost and winter winds might have spared for their keeping.

Nature in her nudity is prodigal of alluring charms on her winter landscapes. The forests, cold, still, and bare, stretched away over the undulating contours of the dunes in their mantle of snow. The lacery of naked branches, silvered with frost, was etched against the moody sky.

He who is alone in the winter woods is in a realm of the spirit where the only borders are the limits of fancy. The big trees, like sentinels grim and gray, seem to keep watch and ward over the treasures that lie in the hush of the frozen ground, where a mighty song awaits the wand of the South Wind. The winding sheet that lies upon the white hills hides the promise as well as the sorrow. The great mystery of earth's fecundity that is under the chaste raiment of the snow is the mystery of all life, and to it the questioning soul must ever come. The message of our loved ones, who are under the white folds, may be among the petals of the flowers when they open.



ON THE WHITE HILLS

*(From the Author's Etching)*





## THE PLUTOCRATS

When we descended the steep road to the beach, we saw Shipmates' Rest in the distance. Saunders came out to greet us on our arrival. He was enveloped in a heavy reefer, and wore a rather sporty-looking new cap. He conducted us into what was once the fish shanty, but, alas, what a change! It had been almost entirely rebuilt. There were five rooms. A stairway led to a trap door in the roof, above which was a railed-in, covered platform. A stone fireplace had replaced the old stove, and there was a large new cook stove in the kitchen, where Narcissus reigned supreme. I was struck with the almost immaculate cleanliness of the place. While the architecture was nerve-racking, and seemed to pursue lines of the most resistance, it looked very comfortable.

"Sipes is out hunt'n rabbits. He'll be back shortly," said Saunders. "You jest hang up yer things an' make yerself to home. Cookie's out back undressin' some fowls, an' 'e'll be glad to see you."

Narcissus soon appeared with a grin on his honest face.

"Ah ce't'nly am glad to see you down heah

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

again!" he exclaimed. "Ah was just fixin' some chick'ns, an' tomorrow we'll have a fracassee with dumplin's. Chick'ns have to wait ovah night in salt watah fo' they ah cooked, but we got pa'tridges fo' today. Ah you fond of them?"

Idle questions, propounded simply to make conversation, often inspire doubt of normal mentality. I had brought a new mouth organ and a ukelele for him from the city, and his delight over the little gifts quite repaid their cost.

My old friend Sipes arrived during the next hour, without any rabbits, and we had a happy reunion over the delicately roasted partridges. There were six of them, with little bits of bacon on their breasts — like decorations for valor on the field.

Sipes presided at the head of the table with the air of a medieval robber baron who had returned to his castle from a successful foray. A napkin was tied around his neck, and he wielded his knife and fork with impressive gusto. Prosperity had begun to bubble. I was told the prices of everything in sight, and informed of the cost of the glass that he had used to make a small skylight in the north room, so as to adapt it for

## THE PLUTOCRATS

a studio. In the fall I had jokingly alluded to something of this kind, but had no idea that it would be included in the plans. Compensation was grandly refused.

"You'r' in on all this, an' we want you to stick 'round 'ere w'en you ain't got nothin' else to do. You knowed us w'en we didn't 'ave a dollar, an' you thought jest as much of us, so you quit talkin' 'bout payin' fer sky-view glass. There's nothin' doin'!"

During the afternoon we heard intermittent strains of "Money-Musk" from the new mouth organ in the kitchen, accompanied by experimental fingering of the ukelele. Narcissus had devised an ingenious framework, which he had put on his head, to hold the mouth organ in place, and enable him to use his hands for the other instrument, but it was only partially successful.

One of the objects of the winter visit was to make some sketches of Saunders and Narcissus for this volume, which had been neglected during the fall. They seemed pleased, and were willing models. Saunders insisted on wetting and combing his hair carefully, and getting into stilted attitudes. He was finally persuaded to let his hair



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

alone and wear his old cap. He was anxious that his ancient meerschaum pipe should be in the picture. It seeped with the nicotine of many years.

"The tobaccy that's been puffed in that ol' pipe 'ud cover a ten-acre lot," he declared, and I believed him. "You can't show that in the pitcher, but you c'n make it look kind o' dark like. Gener'ly I smoke 'Bosun's Delight' an' it's pretty good. It's strong stuff an' none of it ever gits swiped."

When the drawing was finished he criticized it severely, which was quite natural, for no human being is entirely without vanity. Portrait artists, like courtiers, must flatter to succeed.

Narcissus also wanted a pipe in his picture. He thought it would look better than a mouth organ, and, as it was much easier to draw, I humored him. He posed with unctuous ceremony, and assumed some most serious and baffling expressions.

Sipes watched the proceedings with interest, and enlivened them with running comment.

"I been through all that lots o' times. You fellers ain't got nothin' on me, an' if you ever git in a book you'll look like a couple o' horse thieves. I know wot e' done to me."

## THE PLUTOCRATS

The disapproval of these particular sketches was probably deserved. It is a fact, however, that, while readily admitting limitations in other fields of knowledge, there are few people who hesitate to criticize any kind of art work authoritatively. Their immunity from error seems to them remarkable, and to be the result of a natural instinct that they have possessed from childhood. "I know what I like" is a common and much abused expression. They who use it usually do not know what they like or what they ought to like. The phrase covers infinite ignorance, with a complacent disposition of the subject. The assumption of critical infallibility is complete before a portrait of the critic.

Many otherwise intelligent critics respect only age and established art dogma. The dead masters haunt pedantic essayists and opulent purchasers, who accept embalmed opinions that they would be incapable of forming for themselves. Extended consideration of this subject is out of place amid the landscapes of Duneland, where the shades of the justly revered old painters may have deserted their madonnas and be wielding spiritual brushes, charged with elusive tints that

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

flow unerringly upon canvases as tenuous as the evening mists. On them filmy portraits of the old dwellers along the shore may take form and vanish with the morning light, for in these rugged faces are the same attributes that made humanity picturesque centuries ago. If one of these portraits could suddenly materialize, it would bring a staggering price, if there was no suspicion that a modern had painted it. Some stray rhymester has aptly said:

*"If Leonardo done it,  
It is a masterpiece.  
If Mr. Lucas made it,  
'Tis but a mass o' grease."*

"We gotta git some pitchers fer them walls," declared Sipes, "an' you buy 'em fer us. Git some colored ones that's got boats in 'em, an' some fight'n scenes. I'd like to git a nice smooth han'-painted pitcher o' John L. Sullivan, an' I don't care wot it costs!"

The old man wanted these things to enjoy. His purse pride had not yet suggested the idea of posing as a connoisseur and condescending patron of the enshrined dead, without love or

## THE PLUTOCRATS

understanding of what they did, but the germs were there that might enthrall him in the future, for affluence sometimes begets strange vanities.

Great masses of ice had been tumbled and heaped along the shore by the winter waves, and we saw little of the lake, except when we climbed the bluffs. The winds howled over the desolate beach at night in angry portent, and one morning a driving storm came out of the north. Occasionally, from somewhere out above the waves that thundered against the ice, we could hear plaintive cries of gulls that groped through the blinding snow. The drifts piled high against the bluffs on the wild coast. The flying flakes were swept along in thick clouds by the fury of the gale. The house was almost buried. The wind subsided after about twenty-four hours, but the snow continued and fell ceaselessly for three days.

When the skies cleared we opened the trap door to the "crow's nest," the covered platform over the roof, and looked out over the white waste. A few straggling crows accented the immaculate expanse, the blue billows were pounding the ice packs, and a part of the mast of the *Crawfish* pro-



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

truded in the foreground, but everything else was white and still.

We were snowbound for ten days, but contentment reigned at Shipmates' Rest. We dug deep paths that enabled us to reach our water supply, and to communicate with Napoleon in his cosy little barn in the ravine.

The plentiful supply of canned goods, that Narcissus had wisely laid in, was drawn upon for sustenance.

"Them air-tights is life savers!" exclaimed Sipes, as he mixed up some lobster, lima beans, ripe olives, and prunes on his plate. "Wot's the use o' monkeyin' with them fresh things w'en you c'n git grub like this that's all cooked an' ready? All ye need is a can opener to live up as high as ye want to go. Gimme some o' that pineapple fer this lobster, an' pass John them dill pickles!"

"You better let Cookie chop up that mess fer you an' squirt some lollydop on it, an' eat it with a spoon," advised Saunders; "yer git'n' it all over us!"

"It's too bad they can't can pie," said Sipes, "but we got pudd'n's. Hi, there, Cookie, fetch some o' them little brown cans an' tap 'em!"

## THE PLUTOCRATS

Narcissus appeared with a delicious cranberry pie, "with slats on it," and the pudding was forgotten.

"This is the life!" continued the old man, as he broke some crackers into his coffee, "wot do we care fer expense?"

Our evenings were spent in various interesting ways. John and Narcissus had grown very fond of each other, and they spent much time playing checkers. Numberless sound waves went out into the dark, over the cold snow, that came from music, laughter, and rattling poker chips.

There are many hardships in this life, both real and imaginary, but being snowbound at Shipmates' Rest is not one of them.

A typical January thaw set in, and the warm sunshine released us from our feathery bondage. The *Crawfish* was floated out on to the still lake, and we voyaged to the little town at the mouth of the river, from where I took the train for the grimy, noise-cursed city — cursed, indeed, for the unnecessary and preventable dirt and noise in most of our cities would hardly be tolerated in Hades.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

It was August when I again visited Shipmates' Rest. There was a lazy calm on the lake, and a delicate and peculiar odor from the evaporating water. Scattered flocks of terns, nimble-winged and graceful, skimmed over the surface, and dipped, with gentle splashes, for minnows that basked in the sun. The still air over the sandy bluffs shimmered in the heat.

I found my friends in the lake, where they had gone to get cool, and soon joined them.

There were more transformations on the beach. A mouse-colored donkey stood in the shade of the house, regarding us with wise and sleepy eyes. A black puppy gambolled at the water's edge, clamoring for attention. A cow, which I recognized as "Spotty," stood in the creek that flowed out of the ravine, peacefully chewing her cud and switching flies with her abbreviated tail. A couple of white pigs were squealing and grunting in a pen near the little barn, and about a dozen fluffy brown hens, attended by a dignified rooster, were wandering over the sand after stray insects. A tall flag-pole extended above the "crow's nest" on top of the house.

All these things were explained at length, as

## THE PLUTOCRATS

we stood out on the smooth sandy bottom, with the cool water around our necks.

“That anamile wot’s huggin’ the house,” said Sipes, “is to hitch to the windlass w’en we have to haul the boat out. Cookie calls ’im Archibald, but ’is real name’s Mike. He goes ’round an’ ’round with the pole, like we used to do, an’ winds up the rope. W’en we want to run the boat in the lake, we got a block an’ tackle wot’s lashed to that spile out’n the water. We take the rope out from the boat to it, an’ run it back to the windlass, an’ Mike winds ’er out fer us. That kind o’ work ain’t fit fer nobody but a jackass, an’ ’e wouldn’t do it if ’e had money. Mike strays ’round the country a good deal at night fer young cabbage an’ lettuce an’ things, but he’s gener’ly ’ere on deck in the mornin’. Cookie bought ’im an’ the pup in the village this summer. We gotta have a pup, but he’s a cusséd nuisance. W’en ’e’s in ’e yelps to git out, an’ the minute ’e’s out ’e howls an’ scratches to git in. It takes ’bout all o’ one feller’s time to ’tend ’im, but ’e’s lots o’ company. He’ll bark if anybody snoops ’round at night. They’s val’ables ’ere an’ we gotta look out. We call ’im Coonie, an’ ’e’s some dog.



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

Cookie's teachin' 'im a lot o' tricks, an' w'en 'e grows up 'e'll be good to chase patritchies out o' the brush.

"We bought Spotty off o' the Ancient up the river, an' Cookie towed 'er in 'long the road through the hills with a rope. Somehow I alw'ys liked that ol' girl, an' we gotta have milk.

"Them squealers is to eat wot's left out o' the kitchen, an' next winter they'll quit squealin'. Them hens is from the village, too, an' their business is to make aigs. Next year we'll have slews o' young chicks, an' some w'ite ducks. Cookie's got a rubber thing wot 'e fastens on that rooster's bill ev'ry night w'en 'e puts 'im to bed, so 'e can't crow an' roust us out in the mornin'.

"We got a compass an' a binnacle an' a new spy-glass up in the crow's nest. Me an' Bill an' John set an' smoke up there in the shade an' see fellers work'n way off, an' watch Mike windin' up the boat."

"Tell 'im 'bout the motor, long as yer goin' to keep this up all day," interrupted Saunders.

"Oh, yes. We got a new one wot's built in aft o' the cab'n. It's got two cylinders, an' it works fine. We buried the old one up 'side o'

## THE PLUTOCRATS

Cal's dog. It 'ad to be that er us. Bill, you keep still w'en I'm talk'n!

"The mast an' them halyards over the house is to fly signals. W'en we'r' up er down the beach, er out buzz'n on the lake, Cookie runs up the mess flag w'en it's dinner time. He uses red with w'ite edges fer chops an' steaks, an' the w'ite one with a round yellow splotch in the middle means aigs wot's been poached. He flies that, an' a square o' calico under it, w'en we'r' goin' to have corn beef hash an' aigs on top of it. He runs up a big bunch o' cotton cords w'en 'e's made oggrytong speggetties, an' w'en the flag's plain brown, it means beans. There's no knowin' wot that cookie's goin' to do next."

A cool breeze came up in the evening and we built our usual fire on the beach, more for its subtle cheer than its heat, and talked over reminiscences of the big snow-storm, and things that had happened since.

The old sailors were in a state of opulent bliss. All of their desires were satisfied, except, as Sipes expressed it, "git'n even with two er three fellers I know of," and happiness reigned in their simple hearts.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

Out of the tempests of many seas, their battered ship had come, and was anchored in a haven of tranquillity. The languor that comes with satiety and completion was stealing gently over them. Life presented no riddles, and they were without illusions. So far as their capacity for enjoyment extended, the fair earth and the fulness thereof was theirs. The great blue lake, the floating clouds, the jewelled fire of the sunsets, and the star-decked firmament belonged to them, as much as to anybody else. Title deeds to the sands, vine-clad hills, woods, and to the open fields, where suppliant petals drink the rain, could not add to their sense of possession.

Every comfort was around them that their limitations could require. They were spared the inanities and shallow snobbery of "society," and the many other ills that come with existence in a sphere of vanity and hypocrisy. The gates of higher knowledge were not opened to them. Art, science, and literature lay in garnered hoards far beyond their ken, but after their lives are closed, who may judge of the futility, or award the laurel?

Into this happy Arcady — this land of the

## THE PLUTOCRATS

heart's desire and hope's fruition — softly prowled the onion-skinner. Like an evil wind upon a flowery lea, he crept out of the north over the wide waters. He landed at the beach with a boat on the still morning of a day that had promised to be bright and fair. Eveless though this garden was, Satan had entered.

Horatius T. Bascom was a man of perhaps forty-five. His closely cropped moustache was slightly gray. Under it was a mouth like a slit in a letter-box. It seemed to have a certain steel-trap quality that savored of acquirement but not disbursement. His eyes had a shrewd, greedy expression, and, when he frowned, small wrinkles formed between them that somehow suggested the lines of the dollar sign — that sordid mark that disfigures great characters and destroys small ones.

He was the type of man who signs his business letters with a rubber stamp facsimile signature, to facilitate legal evasion in the future. Such letters, insulting to the recipient, are also often stamped with a small inscription to the effect that they were "dictated, but not read" by the cautious sender. Altogether his personality was such





## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

as to prompt one to protect his watch pocket with one hand and his scarf pin with the other while talking with him.

"Hello, boys!" he called out glibly, as he walked up to our group. "You seem quite cosy around here. Have some cigars." He produced a handful and passed them around. We all happened to be smoking, and Sipes was the only one who accepted the proffered weed. He put it in his pocket, with the remark that he would "smoke it some other time" — a phrase that the giver always inwardly resents, but the wily old man may have intended it to offend.

We were not particularly enthusiastic over his descent into our little circle.

"You look pretty cosy yerself," said Sipes; "how much did you git fer that big jool you gouged us out of?"

"I sold it at a loss. It had a small imperfection that I didn't notice when I bought it. You certainly got the best of that bargain."

"They wasn't no imperfection in yer bunch o' bunk w'en you was buyin' it."

We kept rather quiet and let our caller lead the conversation, hoping that the object of his

## THE PLUTOCRATS

visit would finally unravel from the tangle of his small talk. Coonie sniffed around him a few times, and, with unerring instinct, retreated under the house.

The atmosphere of hostility that enveloped his coming gradually dissipated during the forenoon, and he was invited to join us when Narcissus announced lunch.

"Now what you fellows ought to do," he declared, "is to go up the river again and drag it more thoroughly. I think you'd find some more pearls there that would put you well on your feet financially. You could buy some land on the bluff and along the shore and have a larger place. This property will all be much more valuable some day. You could have an automobile, and keep more servants. If you had a bigger and better boat you could put a small crew on it and go anywhere in the world you wanted to."

He outlined methods of using money that dazzled imagination. Like Moses of old, Sipes and Saunders were shown a land of allurements, from what seemed to them a towering height. It could be theirs, if they had the price, and the price was in the lily-margined channel of the Winding River.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

Like most of the rest of humanity, the onion-skinner craved "unearned increment," and he hoped to inveigle his hearers into procuring it for him. The echo of the coin's ring — a sound that encircles the world — was in the voice of the tempter, and the old mariners listened as to a siren's song.

"I'll go with you, if you'd like to have me," he declared, "and I'll pay you a good price for your pearls, as I did before."

"I'll tell ye wot we'll do," said Sipes. "We ain't busy now, an' we'll take the *Crawfish* up to our ol' camp. We'll take Cookie 'long an' keep things up. You c'n go out with the flatboat an' fish fer jools. We'll stick 'round an' watch you work, if we don't git too tired, and we'll give you a fifth o' wot you git. We'll sell our jools to somebody else, an' w'en you sell your share you c'n fix up with us fer our time. If you don't find nothin' you won't have to pay us much anyway, so it'll be a good thing fer you."

While the proposition might have excited the onion-skinner's admiration, from a professional point of view, he failed to see its advantages to him. He suggested that it might be well to think

## THE PLUTOCRATS

matters over for a few days, and that he "might drop around again the latter part of the week."

We helped him push his boat into the lake, and he rowed away, leaving a writhing serpent of discontent at Shipmates' Rest.

"They's a good deal in wot that feller says," declared Sipes. "I don't think nothin' o' him, but jest think wot we c'd do if we had two bar'ls o' cash-money instid o' one! We c'd branch out an' buy this whole cusséd shore. We'd stick up signs and nobody'd dast come on it!"

Saunders was virulent and profane in his comment on "fellers that ain't satisfied with wot they got, w'en they got all they need, er ever oughta have," but finally admitted that "they's a lot more things we might do if we c'd find some more o' them big pearls."

That evening the old cronies departed into the moonlight for consultation. John and I sought our couches early. Narcissus took his new mouth organ and ukelele, and strolled off up the beach with Coonie. They had evidently returned sometime before midnight, for I heard loud imprecations being bestowed on the pup by Saunders, who had found him chewing up a deck of cards



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

on the floor, when he and Sipes had come in later. Doubtless Coonie had been ennuied and distrait, and had longed for occupation. With all his sins, he was a lovable little dog, and his good nature and affection made him irresistible. He was fully forgiven in the morning.

"Bill an' me's talked this thing all over," announced Sipes at the breakfast table. "This damn onion-skinner's got sump'n else in 'is head 'sides jools. He wouldn't want to go up there an' stick 'round jest to watch us clam-fish'n'. We'll find out wot's bit'n' 'im. We'r' goin' to tell 'im to come on with us, an' we want you to go too. We'll go up there an' start the camp an' do some jool-fish'n', an' have a good time, an' mebbe we'll git some. That cuss bilked us on that deal last year, an' you bet we'r' goin' to git square somehow. We'r' goin' to give 'im the third degree, an' you jest watch us fondle 'im. All such fellers as him oughta be exported."

Bascom was received with faultless urbanity when he came again. It was agreed that he should be simply a guest, and that operations should be resumed on the old basis. Sipes assured him that he would be made comfortable.

## THE PLUTOCRATS

"You'll have a fine time up there in them woods. You c'n fish an' loaf 'round an' pick posy flowers, an' us fellers'll find out wot's left in the river. Cookie's goin' to fix up a lot o' stuff, an' we'll have a fine trip. You go an' fetch wot you want to take 'long, an' come early tomorrer."

The necessary preparations were made. Mike wound the *Crawfish* into the lake. Bascom had brought some seedy old clothes, a soft gray hat, and some high boots. His baggage was light and he appeared quite well prepared for an outing. He had some interesting maps with him, which he said would enable us to keep posted as to exactly where we were. He brought a pocket compass, some light fishing tackle, a leather gun case, and I noticed, when his coat was off, that the handle of a small revolver protruded from his left hip pocket.

John was to remain in charge of the place.

"Now don't you take in no bad money, an' don't you pay out none o' no kind w'ile we'r' gone," cautioned Sipes, as we climbed into the boat. "You take care o' yerself, an' don't fall in the water." He bestowed a solemn wink on

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

the old man as the motor began to hum, and we departed, waving farewells to our faithful custodian.

The voyage to the mouth of the river was uneventful. We tied up at the old pier, and Sipes and Narcissus left us for an hour to do some errands in the village. A former experience of Narcissus in that town was disastrous, and the old man thought "somebody'd better be 'long to help Cookie carry things, fer 'e got overloaded 'ere once't."

Saunders and I found my small boat and tent where they had been stored during the winter, and got them out to take with us.

"That feller that Sipes is talk'n' to up there on the hill's the game warden," remarked Saunders. "Wot d'ye s'pose 'e wants with 'im?"

We reëmbarked, made our way up through the marsh, and saw our old camping ground in the distance.

Out in the middle of the river we beheld Captain Peppers on the flatboat, which we had left on the bank the year before. He had been dragging the stream, but had stopped work when he heard our motor in the marsh.

## THE PLUTOCRATS

"Look at that ol' pussyfoot up there fish'n fer jools!" exclaimed Sipes. "He looks like a bug float'n on a chip. You c'n see 'is ol' beak from 'ere! Listen at me josh 'im w'en we git up to 'im. He gives me pains. I'd like to know wot 'e was ever cap'n of. It's prob'ly one o' them demi-john titles. They's slews of 'em. Fellers that drinks a lot gits to be called Colonel an' Major an' Cap'n, that ain't never c'mmanded nothin' er fit nothin' but demijohns all their lives, an' I bet 'e's one of 'em. The redder their noses gits the higher up their titles goes, an' some of 'em gits to be gen'ral's 'fore they'r laid away, an' they's some s'loon jedges over to the county seat that ain't never been in no court 'cept to be fined fer bein' drunk. Don't you start nothin' 'bout that ol' motor, Bill, 'cause it won't do now."

"Hello, Cap'n!" shouted the old man, as we came up. "Fine day, ain't it? Cetchin' any mudturkles?"

The Captain, ill at ease, began poling the flat-boat toward the bank.

"I didn't know you expected to use this outfit again, an' I thought I'd see if they was any loose pearls layin' 'round 'ere. Of course now you're



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

here you c'n go ahead. I don't want to interfere with you in no way."

"You won't," replied Sipes. "We didn't know you was clam-fish'n w'en we fust seen you. We thought you'd mosied up 'ere so's to be near that spring, an' was jest out cruisin' on the river fer fun."

The Captain's nose was a little redder than when we last saw him, but otherwise he appeared unchanged. He was invited to land and have lunch with us. Saunders introduced him to the onion-skinner, liquid cheer was produced, and an *entente cordiale* soon prevailed.

The big sail was again rigged as a shelter tent in its old place, and my tent was put where it was before. The Captain kindly helped to get our camp in order. He showed us a few pearls of moderate value, that he had found during the two weeks he had been at work on the river, and they were purchased by Bascom, at what seemed to be a fair price. Late in the afternoon he partook of more liquid cheer, and rowed away down the river in his little boat.

That night we assembled around the fire, but the circle was not as of old. Something was miss-

## THE PLUTOCRATS

ing and something had been added. The atmosphere was unsympathetic. There is a certain psychology that pervades gatherings, both great and small, that is subtly sensitive to influences that are often indefinable. In this instance the "repellent aura" was obviously the onion-skinner. He exerted himself to be agreeable, but his *bonhomie* was about as infectious as that of a crocodile trying to be playful. His personality did not harmonize with the little amenities of life, and he was a misfit anywhere but in a financial transaction.

Sipes's habitual effervescence seemed to have a false note. Saunders and I kept rather quiet, and the melodies that dwelt in the volatile soul of Narcissus were hushed.

The arboreal katydids were abroad in the woods. These insects are exquisitely beautiful in their green gowns. Like many human creatures, they would be fascinating if they kept still, but they stridulate boisterously and persistently. Their scientific name — *Cyrtophyllus perspicillatus* — is only one of the things against them. The insects seldom move after they have established themselves in a tree for the night, and they

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

often stay in one spot from early August, when they usually mature, until the fall frosts silence their penetrating clamor. The green foliage provides a camouflage that renders them practically undiscoverable, except by accident. We hunted for one particular offender with an electric flashlight and murderous intent nearly half of one night, without finding him. We hurled many sticks and clods of earth into the tree, but failed even to disturb his meter.

It is the male katydid that proclaims the troubles of his kind to the forest world. He begins soon after dark, and continues his work until morning. Curiously, the female is silent.

The loud dissonant sounds are produced by friction of the wings, which have hard, drumlike membranes and edges like curved files. He shuffles them with a continuity that is nerve-racking. Often I would suddenly start from sound sleep, with an indistinct apprehension of some impending peril.

One morning, after a haunted and vexatious night in the little tent, I found that the following impressions had crept over white paper during

## THE PLUTOCRATS

the hours of darkness, and lay beside the burned-out candle. They are the lines of one who suffered and should be read with reverence.

### A DIABOLIC CADENCE

*Into the choirs of the trees there has come a rasping, strident, and unholy sound. A fiend in green is mocking the transient year with mad threnody from his eyrie among the boughs.*

*In that suspended half consciousness that hovers along the margin of a dream, there seems to echo, out of some vast and awful chasm, a rumbling roar of rocks — from some abysmal smithy of the gods within the hidden caverns of the earth where huge boulders are being fashioned by giant hands, to be hurled up into space, to descend with frightful crash, and extinguish the life upon the globe.*

*In the agonized recoil of frenzied fancy from the borders of the dream, the demonic ceaseless sawing, of the arboreal fiend in green, arrests the fleeting phantoms of the brain, and, like a doleful tuneless tolling of a fractured funeral bell — like a barbaric song of sorrow over fallen warriors — the ripping, rasping, resonant notes mingle with the night wind, and drown the harmonious hum of drowsy insects, that kindly nature has sent into the world to lull somnolent fancy into paths of dreams.*

*After the gentle prelude of the crickets — and the lullabies of forest folk — like a mad discordant piper, he starts a strain of dismal dole, and files away the seconds from the onward hours. Mercilessly across the tender human nerves, that seem*



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

to span the taut bridge of a swaying violin, he sweeps a berosined and excruciating bow.

Prolonged wailing for a "lost or stolen" love may have disintegrated his vocal chords. His agonized and shattered heart may have sunk into hopeless depths, and all his articulate forces may have been transmitted to his foliated wings, when his beloved was lured away by some unknown marauder — mayhap of darker green or lovely pink.

The errant pair may be hidden in a distant glade — or dingly dell — gazing upward through the leaves, wondering "what star should be their home when love becomes immortal," and listening to him, as he scrapes the melodies out of the night with that infernal, insistent, and slang-infected song:

"She's beat it — she's beat it — she's beat it —  
Come back — come back — come back —  
You skate — you skate —  
You've swiped — you've swiped  
My mate — my mate — my mate!"

Intermittently he seems to muffle the ragged rhyme, and merge into virulent vers libre — imagistic muse and amputated prose — containing sound projectiles, of low trajectory, that winnow the aisles of the forest for an erring spouse who has fled beyond the range of common rhyme.

Perhaps it's all wrong — about this insect having loved — for love is a holy thing, and it may be that it abides not among the things that have wings and stings. It would seem that he who could trill this nerve-destroying song could know no love, or that it was ever in the world.

## THE PLUTOCRATS

*It may be that this emerald villain has been outlawed by his kind, and he's filing, up there in the dark, on some terrible iron thing, that he's sharpening to annihilate the tribe that banned him. He may be sawing off a branch, and, if so, I hope he's straddling the part that'll fall off when he's through. Maybe he's got some ex-friend up there, pinioned to the bark, and he's boring him to death, by telling him the same thing — the same thing — the same thing — o'er and o'er and o'er.*

*I wish that some gliding fluffy owl, or other rover of the darkened woods, would only pause a moment, and divest the bough of this green-mantled wretch, and then that some mighty ravenous bird would collect the people we know, who come and scrape on something that's inside of them — lay a sound barrage before us — fret the air with piffle, and with sorrows all their own — and chant a woe-ful ceaseless cadence, like the green arboreal fiend, whose sonorous and satanic notes assail us from the bough. Miscreated, malignant, and hellish though they and the fiend may be, they all revel in that rare joy that comes only to him who has found his life work.*

*For our sins must we be scourged, else, why are these people?*

*And,*

*Pourquoi — pourquoi — pourquoi —*

*Is this*

*Katydid — Katydid — Katydid?*

After listening patiently to the reading of the production, my unfeeling prosaic friend Sipes re-

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

marked, "Gosh, we gotta git that insect 'fore it gits dark ag'in!"

The Ancient called the third day after our arrival, and spent the afternoon with us. Bascom seemed much interested in helping to entertain him, and got out his maps. On one of them was indicated the names of the owners of the different tracts of land, and we were surprised to learn that the old man was the possessor of the woods we were in, practically all of the land around the marsh, and a long strip of frontage on the lake. Captain Peppers was also a large owner of property along the lake.

The veiled motive of Bascom's trip with us was now apparent. He wanted options for a year on a large part of these holdings, and was willing to pay what he considered a good price. It seemed that on the day we came, he had had some talk with the Captain on the subject, and they were to take the matter up again.

He wanted options only on the tracts with marsh and lake frontage, and argued that if they were improved the rest of the land would be made much more valuable. He had skilfully arranged his stage setting for the object of his trip, and

## THE PLUTOCRATS

claimed that the idea had just occurred to him while he was taking this little outing. He said that he accidentally happened to have the maps, and had brought them along to familiarize himself with the country he was in.

He made the Ancient a substantial offer for an option on most of his holdings, at a price that the old man did not seem inclined to consider, but he was open to negotiation.

"I been livin' 'ere most all my life, an' I've ranged 'round this ol' marsh an' them sand-hills so much that I wouldn't know how to act if they wasn't mine, but if you'll git yer figgers up whar I c'n see 'em, mebbe we'll talk about it some more."

"You see," said Bascom to Saunders, after the old settler had left, "this land idea is a sort of a side issue with me. I think that perhaps a little money might be made here, but I would have to take some big chances. You and Sipes talk with those fellows a little, and see if you can't bring them around to business, and I'll pay you something for it if they sign up. You might have some influence with them. Tell them that I mentioned to you that it was just a gamble with



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

me, and probably there isn't a chance in a hundred that I will exercise the options at all, and they will be ahead whatever they get out of me now."

The old shipmates agreed to do what they could and the subject was dropped for the time being.

The accidental exposure of the contents of a long fat wallet that Bascom carried inside his vest revealed the fact that he had a large amount of money with him, much larger than could possibly be required for ordinary use. Evidently he was prepared to close the business with the owners of the land the moment their minds met.

"Holy Mike! Did ye see that wad?" whispered Sipes, who was awed by the magic of the gold certificates. "I'd like to know some way to git that wad," he remarked later. "I'd play some seven-up with 'im fer some of it, but they's sump'n 'bout 'im that makes me think it wouldn't do."

I realized that the despoiler was at the gates of the Dune Country. The foot of the Philistine was on holy ground. This man with a withered soul was an invader of sanctuary. He would tear the dream temples down that the centuries

## THE PLUTOCRATS

had builded. With steam shovels and freight cars he would level the undulating hills, and haul away their shining sands to a world of greed, where man does not discriminate. The wild life would flee from steam whistles that shrieked through the forests, and from smoke that defiled the quiet places. Belching chimneys and unsightly signs would befoul and deface the fair domain. With the beauty of the dunes he would feed a Moloch in the sordid town.

The peaceful marsh, and the river with its channel of silver light, would be invaded with dredges. Abbatoirs, tanneries, factories, and blast furnaces might come. The Winding River, with its halo of memories, would flow away with receding years, and a foul stream would carry the stain of desecration and filth out to pollute the crystal depths of the lake.

"Improvements" were contemplated in Duneland, and the spectre of hopeless ugliness hovered along its borders. The altar of Mammon awaited a sacrifice, for "money might be made here" if certain manufacturing interests, to which Bascom vaguely alluded, "could be induced to utilize these now practically worthless wastes of sand."

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

In years to come the wild geese may look down from their paths through the soiled skies, to the earth carpet below them, and wonder at the creatures that have changed it from a fabric of beauty to a source of evil odors and terrifying sounds.

The clam-fishing was unsatisfactory. The mollusks seemed to be about exhausted. Sipes and Saunders worked faithfully for several days, but only found a dozen or so, and none of them contained pearls.

"We gotta wait fer a new crop," declared Saunders, who was disgusted with the whole trip and wanted to go home.

Bascom persuaded the old sailors to remain a few days, to give the Ancient a chance to come back, and to impress the Captain at the village with the idea that he was in no hurry to see him. They had no love for that red-nosed worthy and acquiesced.

The flatboat was restored to its berth on the bank, and in the early morning Sipes and Saunders made a trip to the village in the *Crawfish*. On their return at lunch time they reported that they had seen nothing of the Captain.



*(From the Author's Etching)*





## THE PLUTOCRATS

I spent the afternoon up the river and heard a great many shots echoing through the woods. When I returned to camp I found that Bascom had been out shooting robins. There were thirty-seven of the innocent little redbreasts in his bloody bag, and the game warden was with him when he returned from his shameful expedition.

It seemed that Sipes, when he arrived from the village, had pictured to Bascom the glories of a certain robin pie, "with little dumplings," that he said Narcissus had once compounded, and the fascinated onion-skinner, although knowing that it was illegal to kill songsters, had taken the risk of going out with his gun to obtain material for another one. He was mad all the way through, but was a much subdued man.

"Them robins is song birds, an' it's ag'in the law to kill 'em at any time," said the warden. "They're wuth ten dollars apiece an' costs to the state, an' you've got to go to the county seat with me. Mebbe you'll be jugged too, fer they're pretty severe with fellers that shoot little birds."

Bascom offered to fix up the matter privately, on a liberal financial basis, but the minion of the law was inexorable. The culprit must have re-

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

garded that part of the country as most peculiar and inhospitable.

Erskine Douglas Potts, the game warden, was a lengthy loose-jointed individual. One eye drooped in a peculiar way, and seemed to rove independently of the other. Sipes declared that "Doug' c'n look up in a tree with one eye, an' down a hole with the other lamp at the same time." Odd humor radiated from him and he had a deep sense of his dignity as an upholder of the "revised stat-toots." Two printed copies of the state game laws protruded from the top of his trousers, where they were secured by a safety pin. "Casey," his small yellow dog, was his inseparable companion. They were a devoted pair of chums and Potts refused to allow a "pitcher" to be made of him unless the dog was included.

Casey was an animal of rare acumen. He had once taken the prize at a village dog-show, where intelligence and not breeding was considered, and his laurels were regarded as imperishable by his proud master.

"They didn't put me up, but if they had I'd 'a' lost out 'side o' him," he remarked. "The dogs is the smartest things in that town, an' they

## THE PLUTOCRATS

couldn't be no kind of a brain show thar without 'em. This dog's a wonder. He knows the time o' day, an' all the short cuts through the woods an' sand-hills. We ain't neither of us got no pedigrees, but we seem to navigate 'round pretty well without 'em.

"W'en we hear any shoot'n off in the woods we go out on a still-hunt. Casey finds the foot trails an' follers 'em up. 'Tain't long 'fore we spot the feller with the gun. Then we foregather with 'im an' ask fer 'is shoot'n license, an' inspect wot 'e's got. If it's song birds, er game out o' season, we form in line an' perceed to whar the scales o' justice hang, an' the feller has to loosen up.

"Casey hikes down to the depot w'en they's anybody thar with baggage er packages, an' sniffs 'em over. If 'e scents any birds 'e alw'ys lets me know. I git half o' the fines that's levied, an' this 'ere bag we've jest brought in looks like pretty good pickin'. It's durn poor shoot'n that don't shake down sump'n fer somebody. Casey an' me lives alone, an' we have lots o' long talks together. He knows more'n most lawyers. He's my depity, an' I couldn't git along without 'im. A feller that owns a nice new breech loadin' gun offered to trade



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

me a horse fer 'im last week, but they was nothin' doin'.

"Me an' Casey don't miss much that goes on 'round 'ere. After them robins is took off o' the bar o' justice, we'll fetch 'em back, if the jedge don't cop 'em, an' we'll let yer dark-spot cook 'em, an' we'll have a pie that's all our own. Yer moneyed friend c'n think about it while 'e's in the county jail countin' the change 'e's got left."

It was arranged that the prisoner and his marble-hearted captor should be taken to the village that night in the *Crawfish*, and the journey to the county seat made the next day.

The evening meal was far from festive. The boat was poled out into the current and started away down stream in the moonlight, with Saunders at the helm. Sipes and the warden smoked complacently on the roof of the cabin, and the moody Bascom sat between them. Casey was in charge of the evidence near the bow, where he jealously guarded the bag of robins and kept his eye on the evil doer.

Sipes had remarked to me before they left that "things has been pretty dull 'round this 'ere camp, but now they's sump'n doin'."

## THE PLUTOCRATS

"Ah tole Mr. Bascom that 'e bettah not go shoot'n' much 'round heah," said Narcissus, with a quiet chuckle, after the party had left, "but 'e said 'e wanted one o' them robin pies that Mr. Sipes tole 'im 'bout. Ah don't remembah 'bout no robin pie, but it might be awful good. The wa'den has 'fiscated all them robins, an' Ah guess we got to fix up sump'n else fo' dinnah tomorrow."

I asked no questions when the old shipmates returned, and they volunteered no information as to any part that they might or might not have played in the little drama of the afternoon, but I suspected that the "third degree" that Sipes had mentioned before we started was now in process of application.

Justice was dealt out to Bascom with unsparing hand when he reached the county seat, and he was compelled to pay the full penalty of his wrongdoing. After liquidating his fines, and incidentally himself, in a moderate way, to drown his troubles, he had spent an hour or so about town, and was just taking the train, when he was again arrested for carrying a concealed weapon. He had neglected to leave his revolver at the camp, and was assessed accordingly.

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

He came back to us after three days, with a crestfallen air, and said that he was ready to break camp if we were. Nothing had been seen of the Ancient or the Captain, and he regarded it as poor strategy to stay longer, with no particular excuse for doing so. He would devise some other way of getting at the coy landowners.

We packed up our things and departed. The engine stopped just before we reached the village, and we found that our gasoline was exhausted. Unfortunately the oars had been forgotten when we left Shipmates' Rest, but as the new motor had worked perfectly, there had been no occasion for them. We poled the *Crawfish* to the old pier, landed, and stowed my little boat and tent where we had found them. We then took the gasoline can and walked up to the village, leaving Bascom in charge of the *Crawfish*.

He was anxious for us to run across the Captain accidentally, and if possible get him down to the boat on some pretence. In effect, we were to shoo the wary Captain to the ambush, where the onion-skinner lay in wait with his tempting yellowbacks. We did not look very hard for him, but I happened to see him down the road

## THE PLUTOCRATS

talking to a man in a buggy. I was not inclined to do any shooing, and did not disturb him.

We spent some time in the village store. When we came out, the sky, which had looked threatening all the morning, was overcast with dark angry clouds. A big storm was brewing, and we decided not to start for Shipmates' Rest until it was over. There was a high off-shore wind. The waves were rising rapidly out on the lake, but the protected water along the bluffs was still comparatively calm. As the wind increased we went down to the pier, intending to tie the boat up in a more sheltered place, and remain at the village all night. We found to our dismay that the *Crawfish* was adrift far out on the water. Under the strain of the wind and the river current, the line had parted that had held it to the pier.

Bascom was gesticulating wildly for help, but there was no means of getting to him. There happened to be no boats around the mouth of the river large enough to be of use in the waves that were now breaking over the *Crawfish*. There was no gasoline on the boat, and if there had been oars Bascom could not have got the boat



## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

back with them after he got into the current. Evidently he had not realized his danger until it was too late to jump overboard and swim ashore, or it may not have occurred to him.

"That poor feller ain't got no more chance 'an a fish worm on a red-hot stove," shouted Sipes above the roar of the wind, as we watched the helpless craft being tossed and borne away. To do the old man justice, he forgot the boat, and our belongings on it, in the face of Bascom's peril, as we all did.

There was a faint hope that some steamer on the lake might rescue him, but there was none in sight, and we doubted if the boat would stay afloat more than a few minutes more in such a wind and sea. Rain began to come in torrents, and the distant object, that we had watched so anxiously, was obliterated by the storm.

We made our way back to the village store with difficulty, and telephoned to the lifesaving station about thirty miles away on the coast, but there was no possible hope of help from there. There was much excitement among a few villagers who came out into the storm, but nobody could suggest any means of relief.

## THE PLUTOCRATS

We spent a gloomy and sleepless night in the little town, where we were hospitably provided for.

Somewhere far out on the wind-lashed lake the turbulent seas and the storm played with a thing that had become a part of the waste and débris of the wide waters. Bascom's god was in his leather wallet, but it was powerless, except with men. The winds and the waves knew it not. Greed, that dominates the greater part of mankind, becomes ghastly illusion, as the frail creature it disfigures blends into the elements when finality comes.

Mother Nature, with her invincible forces, sometimes chastens her erring children who do not understand. She had guarded her treasures in Duneland through the countless years, and now, with a breath from the skies, a destroyer had been wafted from its portals.

Poor Bascom had indeed received the "third degree" and had been "exported" in a way that was not contemplated by the sorrowful old sailors.

The storm subsided the next day and we made the journey along the beach on foot to Ship-

## SKETCHES IN DUNELAND

mates' Rest, where we found everything in good order. We related our doleful experience to John, and there was a cloud over our little party for several days. Like most of the troubles in this world, particularly when they are those of others, the sadness of Bascom's fate soon lost its poignancy.

"I'm sorry fer Bascom," remarked Sipes, "an' I hate to lose the boat an' all the stuff wot's on it, but Gosh, I wish I had that wad! He made a lot o' money in 'is business, an' money's all 'e ever wanted to git, an' 'e's got plenty of it right with 'im, so he ain't got no kick comin'. He was a hard citizen. All they was that was good about 'im was 'is cash-money, an' it's like that with a lot o' people. I don't s'pose 'e'll ever git anywheres near the New Jerus'lum that Zeke tells about, but if 'e does, I bet 'e'll want to skin some o' them pearls wot's on the gate."

I arranged to leave for home, and promised to write to Sipes if I ever saw anything in the newspapers relating to the finding of Bascom's body.

"By the way, Sipes, I never knew your first name. What is it?"

"My fust name? It's Willie, but don't you

## THE PLUTOCRATS

never put that on no letter. Me an' you an' Bill's the only ones wot knows it."

I departed out of Duneland, and one cold afternoon during the winter I opened the door of my city studio, after a short absence, and under it was a card that had been left during the past hour. On it was engraved,

HORATIUS T. BASCOM

REAL ESTATE

FARM LANDS AND MANUFACTURING

SITES A SPECIALTY

I mailed it to "Mr. W. Sipes" with a trite allusion to bad pennies, and such other comment as seemed befitting.







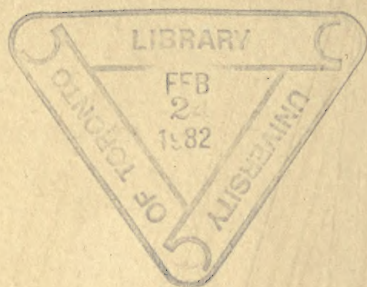














PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE  
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

---

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

---

F  
532  
M67R4

Reed, Earl Howell  
Sketches in duneland



